The Sun.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1880.

Amusements To-Day.

Academy of Music—La Favorita.
Abbey's Park Theatre—Yorick's Love.
Aquarium—Circus. Matinee.
Booth's Theatre—Sullivan.
Bijou Opera House—Lawn Tennis.
Bunnell's Museum—Broadway and 9th st.
Chickering Hall—Lecture.
Daly's Theatre—Needles and Pins. Matinee.
Grand Opera House—Miles. Matinee.
Haverly's 14th St. Theatre—Hiawatha. Matinee.
Haverly's 5th Av. Theatre—Love.
Haverly's Niblo's Garden—Humpty Dumpty. Matinee.
Koster & Bial's Concert Hal—Concert.
Madison Square Theatre—Hazel Kirke.
Middleton's Dime Museum—298 Bowery.
Masonic Temple—Mesmerism.
San Francisco Minstrels—Broadway and 29th st.
Standard Theatre—My Geraldine.
Theatre Comique—Mulligan Guards' Nominee. Matinee.
Tony Pastor's Theatre—Variety.
Union Square Theatre—The Banker's Daughter.
Wallack's Theatre—Forget-Me-Not.
Windsor Theatre—Humpty Dumpty. Matinee.

The Way the Money Goes.

The sensation of the session, in Congress, has been the disclosure made in the House regarding the new burdens of the pension system, burdens "so appalling in magnitude," said Mr. HUBBELL of Michigan, the leading authority of Congress on the subject, "as to almost stagger one who looks at and computes the vast aggregates that must be paid out."

Already a year ago the pension appropriation had risen to be the heaviest annual expenditure of the country, excepting the interest on the public debt. But the sum of $32,404,000, set apart last winter for the current fiscal year, has been increased to $50,000,000 for the year to come; and this enormous increase must be maintained for many years. No wonder that Congressmen for a moment stood aghast at these figures.

This was not all. It was discovered and announced a few days since that the Arrears of Pension bill, passed by Congress and signed by HAYES, would cost this country the monstrous sum of upward of two hundred and forty-three millions of dollars.

That bill was a pure gratuity. No contract, express or implied, warranted it. It applied to cases in which many years had been allowed for filing or prosecuting claims, and yet they had not been filed or pushed. When it was presented to Congress, the highest guess at the cost made by its friends was twenty-five million dollars, and even that troubled some Congressmen, who, nevertheless, did not venture to vote against it. The House threw the bill on the Senate, apparently thinking it might be killed there; the Senate in turn threw the responsibility on HAYES; and HAYES of course signed the swindle.

Congress might have enacted a reasonable, just, and generous law, fully rehabilitating claimants who through ignorance or lack of the needed evidence had failed to seasonably establish their claims. Instead of doing that, and in a reckless rivalry for the soldier vote, both parties voted for a measure whose cost they did not stop to estimate. Yet even voting in the dark as they did, they might have hesitated had they suspected that this bill would take a quarter of a billion of dollars out of the Treasury.

In the first moment of incredulity, the hope was expressed that there might be some error—perhaps of about two hundred millions—in Mr. HUBBELL's calculations; but these are his convincing facts and figures:

"Up to Nov. 1, 1880, we had paid out for arrearages alone $24,600,487.27. We had appropriated for that purpose $25,515,000. The average arrearage of each pensioner already on the list has been officially computed to be $560.58.

"At the same date—that of the report—there were in the office of live, original claims, after making all deductions, 282,597 still pending; and the average amount of arrears on first payment is $1,100. Now suppose—and I take it it will be a fair supposition—that 30 per cent of these 282,597 claims are disallowed. Then there would still be 197,818 claims yet to be paid; and at an average of $1,100 each, what is yet to be paid would amount to $217,599,800, making the total cost of arrearages thus far, including that estimated, $242,200,287.27. This will be reduced somewhat by the fact that there are yet 1,238 claimants to come in, in whose case the average amount of the arrear is $560.58; and still further by the fact that at the date of the report, Nov. 1, the Commissioner had at his disposal for that purpose $1,098,334.04 still available for payment of arrears. Hence, if we look as we ought to look, at the probable aggregate of the arrears of pensions alone, we will find, by adding the amount appropriated ($25,515,000) to the amount estimated ($217,599,800), after deducting 30 per cent of claimants, as before stated, that it will reach the astounding sum of $243,114,800. That is the first payment. That is to commence with."

What can be done? Apparently nothing but to pay the money. The bill is a law, and the claims under it are filed or in process of filing. There remains only the meagre satisfaction of charging this act of recklessness, by which two hundred and forty million dollars are to be expended, instead of twenty-five, against the historic reputation of the Congress that was guilty of it, and of the Fraudulent President, who, of course, would not take the responsibility of saying No.

The Boycott Business.

The more that is learned about BOYCOTT, the Irish land agent, the less sympathy is felt for him. He seems to have been a vulgar type of village tyrant, who for years had ground down the wretched peasants in his neighborhood by all kinds of harsh and petty impositions. It is none the less true that this man has given, and seems still inclined to give, the British Government a good deal of trouble, and that he has bestowed a name on a new method of social terrorism which is particularly effective, and with which the law, apparently, is powerless to cope.

It is hard to see how the British authorities in Ireland could have done less or more than they actually did do in this matter. BOYCOTT could not get in his crops, because the neighboring workmen, starving as many of them were, refused to do a stroke of work for him. They had a perfect right to take this stand, and there is nothing in such a state of things to entitle BOYCOTT to claim compensation at the hands of the Government. Some troops were subsequently sent to his estate, not at all for the purpose of assisting to harvest his grain, but to prevent a threatened breach of the peace. A number of Protestant laborers from Ulster, it will be remembered, had volunteered to get in the crops, and there were fears, whether well or ill founded, that an attack would be made upon them. To what extent the danger existed outside of BOYCOTT's imagination was a question of evidence for the functionaries invested with discretionary powers. If they believed the report, their duty in the premises was plain enough. It has been hastily said that the officials ought to have prevented the Ulster laborers from going to Lough Mask, because the Government could not go on protecting this sort of expedition, at a cost to the country in each case estimated at from $35,000 to $50,000. Just at present, however, there is no law to prevent a landlord from obtaining laborers from an adjoining county, whether for hire or from pure sympathy; and in the absence of such powers of arbitrary interference the authorities had just one function to fulfil, viz., to keep the peace.

It is not the fault, but the misfortune, of the GLADSTONE Government that this BOYCOTT case has brought into active exercise, over large parts of Ireland, a new and formidable engine of persecution. No sooner was the precise course taken by the peasantry at Lough Mask generally known, and its efficiency demonstrated by the fact that after his crops were housed BOYCOTT at once departed, owning the place to be untenable, than other tenants began to ask why they should not apply the same pressure to their own landlords. It is not improbable that such imitators were encouraged by the promoters of the Land League, who would be quick to appreciate a process of coercion not discredited by violence and not amenable to law. At all events, the measures employed so successfully at Lough Mask were all at once reproduced on a number of estates, but only, it would seem, in cases where the rigor of landlord or agent had engendered exceptional bitterness.

What is the process known as Boycotting, and which is fast taking the place of the shillelah and the shotgun among the instruments of Irish protest and resistance? It is a species of social ostracism, enforced with pitiless severity in the minutest details, as well as in the large concerns of life. The presence of a Boycotted person is not acknowledged by a word, a look, a gesture. Not only is there no intercourse, but no business is directly or indirectly transacted with him. Nobody will buy his grain, his fruit, his garden produce, his horses, cattle, fowls, or anything he has to sell; nobody will sell him a pound of meat, an ounce of flour, a gill of whiskey, or an hour's work. No one will give or lend him assistance in any way, and no money will tempt a man to approach his dwelling. Under such circumstances, a Boycotted person must stock his house as if he were going on an Arctic cruise, for otherwise, no matter how large his bank account, he may starve in the midst of plenty. Even when supplies have been procured from a distance he would lead the life of a castaway on some desert island, with the stinging consciousness that, in his case, solitude bore constant witness to the hate and loathing of every human being within reach of eye or ear.

In a word, Boycotting means much the same sort of compulsory isolation as that to which lepers were subjected in ancient and mediæval times. Indeed, the Irish process is, in some respects, a harsher one, since, even among the Jews, the kinfolk of a leper were allowed to bring him food and clothing, provided they laid the articles on the ground at a certain distance. It is not at all impossible, on the other hand, that under the stern application of the Irish proscriptive measure some landlords may be made to feel the same pangs of hunger which their tenants have so frequently experienced. It is certain that a threat of Boycotting is already regarded with peculiar dismay, and that this impalpable engine of coercion has already proved more effective than overt acts of violence.

How to Run a Prayer Meeting.

It seems that the great trouble about a prayer meeting is the impossibility of making the brethren pray in a way to interest and edify all the attendants. At least that was the opinion pretty generally expressed by the Baptist ministers who discussed the subject in conference on Monday.

The Rev. Dr. PARMLY thought that the room in which the prayer meeting was held had much to do with its success. A damp, gloomy room depressed the spirits of supplicants and audience, and put an effectual damper on fervency. It is easy to understand how that must be so. What we call spiritual conditions are largely produced or influenced by merely material causes. Their bodily state, whether of nervous excitement or of nervous depression, goes far in determining the character of the religious emotions of people. We can therefore appreciate the importance of Dr. PARMLY's suggestion that prayer meetings should not be held in a damp, cheerless, badly lighted room; in the basement of the church, for instance; but in a light and airy apartment, where everything about shall tend to keep the people present in a healthy state of body and mind.

But we fail to see on what good grounds Dr. PARMLY can sustain his arbitrary rule limiting the prayers to "three or at most five minutes each." What right has anybody to determine for another man the length of time he shall consume when he addresses a voluntary and extemporaneous petition to the Almighty? And yet both Dr. PARMLY and all the ministers who spoke on the subject at Monday's conference laid great stress on the necessity of compelling supplicants to shorten their prayers. And this was the reason they gave: that long prayers bored the meeting! Sometimes, said Dr. PARMLY, a bore has to be repressed by starting a song, or cut off by asking some one else to lead in prayer.

But to whom is the prayer addressed; to the meeting or to the Throne of Grace? What is the object of the suppliant in making it; to interest the human hearers or to pour forth the yearnings of his soul into the ear of Deity? If he talks for the purpose of captivating the attention of those about him, it is not a prayer; it is only a pretence of prayer, and he is really playing the part of a hypocrite. Individual communion with GOD, if it is possible for man, ought surely to be the most sacred of all exercises, and whosoever assumes to interrupt it, or to say just how long it must last, to save his own or anybody else's patience, puts himself between the man and his Maker. How preposterous, how sacrilegious, to undertake to say what are the limits of Divine patience with a suppliant, or to measure them by human weariness!

The Rev. Mr. MILLER, a colored brother, complained that some of his people were inclined to be too vociferous in their prayers. Some of the brethren would open the meeting with petitions so loud and violent that a reaction would follow their prayers. The congregation would be wrought up to a pitch of enthusiasm which the others, less gifted in prayer, could not maintain, and a chill would come over the meeting. The climax was reached too early, and that always detracts from the interest of the subsequent exercises. But because some men lack zeal in prayer, would Mr. MILLER compel those who have it to cool their devotional spirit merely for the sake of human convenience?

We are astounded to hear such views of prayer expressed by ministers of the Gospel. They would treat the act of supplication as a performance undertaken for the gratification of a congregation, and which no more really and truthfully conveys the sentiments of the utterer than the prayer sung by an opera singer.

Is it not because of these false, artificial, and totally illogical views regarding prayer that the prayer meeting has become so obnoxious to the public as a social institution? Men pretend to pray to God for exercise the time they are only addressing human hearers, and the human interest is the one they are urged by their teachers to first regard. That is really to make a farce of prayer and a hypocrite of the pretended suppliant.

Of course, it is a different thing when a liturgy is used. That is a formal expression of the common devotional feeling, and it assumes to be no more. When men use it they are not going through the intellectual process of manufacturing a prayer, but are simply employing a prepared form of devotion, just as when they sing a psalm. If, however, anybody undertakes to address Heaven on his own account, and to express original sentiments, he is a hypocrite just so far as he utters what is not spontaneous with him, or arranges his words with reference to the opinions of merely earthly auditors as to the literary merits of his petition.

If the Founder of Christianity spoke truly, such prayers are an offence to GOD. And He has furnished all Christendom with a prayer which is comprehensive enough in its petitions to be sufficient of itself for any prayer meeting. If the Baptists will confine themselves in their prayer meetings to the Lord's Prayer, they will never have to complain that they are bored by long harangues, presented instead of spontaneous petitions, and they will be obeying the advice and command of CHRIST. By so doing, too, they will do much to drive odious cant out of their body.

New York's Next Senator.

In about three weeks from this time, twenty Senators in Congress will be elected by the Legislatures of as many different States. These elections will materially change the politics of that important branch of the Government.

The Senate is divided into three classes, having regard to the expiration of the terms of the several members. These classes are numbered respectively one, two, and three.

The seat filled by Mr. KERNAN has always belonged to class number one. During much of this long period of ninety-two years it has been occupied by able men. The first to take it was Gen. SCHUYLER of Revolutionary fame, the father-in-law of ALEXANDER HAMILTON. His immediate successor was AARON BURR, who killed HAMILTON in the duel at Weehawken. After three persons of moderate talents had spent a year or two in the Senate, GOUVERNEUR MORRIS, one of the distinguished financiers and diplomatists of that epoch, made a brilliant mark in the Chamber as a Senator from New York of class number one.

JOHN ARMSTRONG was connected by marriage with the then powerful LIVINGSTON family. He became a Senator of this class. He was then sent as Minister to France. He was subsequently Secretary of War under MADISON, at the time the British took Washington and burned the Capitol and the Executive Mansion. ARMSTRONG was made the scapegoat of the Administration for this unfortunate and humiliating event. Though a man of splendid qualities, he retired from public life and sank into moody obscurity at Red Hook, on the Hudson, where he died many years afterward. Doctor SAMUEL LATHAM MITCHILL, who wrote a pamphlet to prove that a whale was not a fish, followed ARMSTRONG as Senator.

NATHAN SANFORD was the Senator of this class for a long period. He succeeded JAMES KENT as Chancellor of the State, and was succeeded in the Senate by MARTIN VAN BUREN, who occupied the seat eight years. In the troubled epoch from 1832 to 1844, NATHANIEL P. TALLMADGE, an orator of unusual cleverness, filled this chair. He was followed for several years, through an era not less tempestuous, by DANIEL S. DICKINSON, a debater of vigorous powers. It is only recently that Mr. DICKINSON died, highly respected by all parties. Mr. KERNAN's predecessors, since Mr. DICKINSON, have been HAMILTON FISH, PRESTON KING, EDWIN D. MORGAN, and REUBEN E. FENTON.

A seat which has been thus occupied from the foundation of the Government, ought not now to be handed over to a nobody.

Proceedings in the Senate yesterday were of a routine nature. Bills were passed giving Commissioner BAIRD the Berlin Fishery Exhibition awards free of duty; increasing the sessions of Territorial Legislatures from forty to sixty days, and giving $5,000 to increase the height of the pedestal of the FARRAGUT statue. Mr. INGALLS introduced a bill for the admission of New Mexico as a State. In the House the consideration of the subject of funding outstanding Government bonds at lower rates of interest proved so inflammatory to Messrs. SPARKS and WEAVER that such words as liar, scoundrel, and villain passed between them, and they took their coats off for a fight. It was stopped before the first round.

SECOR ROBESON is a fine person to be declaiming about high constitutional duty.

A percentage of the Republican members of the House are respectable men, and have reputations to look after. Are they going to permit such a fellow as SECOR ROBESON to impose himself upon them as their leader?

Two more names must be added to the surprising necrology of military and naval officers of high rank in the European services for the last two months of 1880. They are Baron VIALA CHARON, General of Division in the French Army, and formerly Governor-General of Algiers, and Rear Admiral SELLIER of the French Navy.

Holding the fort in four inches of snow, with a blizzard blowing about their camp fires, must make the deluded followers of PAYNE rather sick of the job they have undertaken. This is by no means what they meant by going on to Oklahoma.

Those connoisseurs of wines who have at any time during the past forty-four months enjoyed the hospitality of the White House will be pleased to learn that for the entertainment of Mr. R. B. HAYES, at a private table in Brooklyn, day before yesterday, there were provided Chateau Yquem, amontillado sherry, Johannisberger Cabinet, dry Pommery, and Clos de Vougeot.

The Empress of Austria shows prudence in giving up her hunting tour in Ireland. Last year she carried on her sport in gorgeous fashion during the prevalence of the Irish famine; but probably her councillors think a threatened insurrection of the peasantry a more disagreeable thing than an actual famine among them.

A year ago South Africa seemed to be under the control of the Colonial Government. Now the Pondos have defeated its troops, the Basutos have expelled the column that invaded their country, and the Boers have reestablished the Transvaal republic. With Ireland, Africa, and Afghanistan to watch, the British military forces have their hands full.

The bill introduced into Congress by Mr. PAGE of California, making the anniversary of the discovery of America a legal holiday in the District of Columbia, shows a rare degree of gratitude in a deserving man. Such a holiday might possibly turn business upside down and cause some people to curse CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS rather than bless him; but it would at least show that we have not forgotten the old navigator and are still wondering what would have become of us had America never been discovered. Mr. PAGE's plan, however, savors somewhat of the zeal of the neophyte; perhaps he has been lately reading about the discovery of America in the Congressional Library. On the whole, it would be wiser to refrain from remembering COLUMBUS in this particular way. It would be the opening of the calendar to a rush of commemorative holidays. It would be rather alarming to find some Virginia member, when Congress reassembles, asking to have an annual holiday for the saving of Capt. JOHN SMITH by POCAHONTAS.

No wonder the Czar should think of abdicating. Some of his loving subjects have made another unsuccessful but suggestive attempt to blow him up.

The rails were slippery. This is the explanation given by the Pennsylvania Railroad engineer whose train yesterday plunged round a corner upon a group of people at a station, throwing this side and the other these who were not nimble enough to get out of the way. But did he not know beforehand that the rails were slippery?

The sum appropriated by the Army bill, as agreed upon by the House committee, is too large by millions. Reduce the army to 16,000 men!

This is a highly civilized and very Christian country; but a mob of Mississippi lynchers burned a man alive on Saturday night.

Can nothing be done to save the millions of blue fish, weak fish, sea bass, porgies, and menhaden now imprisoned in Shinnecock Bay?

Although some learned persons and many unlearned look to see the end of the world in the next twelvemonth, the arrival of that catastrophe is by no means certain. Our opinion is that the work of reorganizing the Democratic party in New York had better go ahead.

If it has no more pressing business on hand, the Mrs. R. B. HAYES Temperance Association of Washington, D. C., might inquire whether Mr. R. B. HAYES turned down his wineglasses at the Brooklyn dinner, and if so, whether they stayed turned down.

Ever since the work of restocking the Connecticut River was begun, the Massachusetts fishermen have complained bitterly of the bad faith and greed of the Connecticut fishermen at the mouth of the river. Of late they have become so exasperated, in brooding over their wrongs, that many of them favor the policy of giving over all attempts at fish culture, for the present at least, and clearing the river as speedily as possible of its finny denizens, by way of leaving the pound fishers of the Nutmeg State without an occupation. We commend to the meditation of the Massachusetts fishermen the old proverb about the folly of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. Far distant be the day when the broiled Connecticut River shad shall become an epicurean memory!

Things have not been going to suit the *Freeman's Journal* lately. Witness this extract from a leading article:

"The daily papers are infamous, and that without exception, in New York. No decent man, without necessity from his state in life, ought to read any of them."

On second thought, however, an exception is made in favor of our mercantile contemporary, the *Journal of Commerce*, which is pronounced as decent, though not as full of news, as it was when the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* used to read it, "away out on the banks of the Mohawk," fifty years ago. But all the other daily newspapers of New York, according to this out-of-sorts censor, are infamous; a "scum of filth" appears in every one of them; they print things that "any decent Christian police would suppress."

The short answer to all this is that it is not true, and that it is silly. There are, undoubtedly, publications in this city that may be appropriately described as infamous. But to lump all New York newspapers in the same category is as absurd as it would be to affirm, because things are stolen in this city every day, that all New York men are thieves.

For shame, esteemed contemporary! A religious journal should be a pattern of justice, candor, meekness, gentleness, charity, and courtesy. If the illustration of these virtues is above its power, it should at least stick to facts, especially when talking about neighbors.

CONTAGION IN THE SCHOOLS.

Criticisms on the Conduct of Teachers and the Doctors who Attend Sick Pupils.

School Commissioner Manierre and Principal T. Dwight Martin recently complained to the Health Board that reports of contagious diseases sent to the Board of Education failed to reach the schools in time to answer the desired purpose, and that the readmission of children who had been ill was delayed by lack of proper certificates that the danger of contagion was over.

Sanitary Superintendent Day, who investigated these complaints, reported to the Health Board yesterday that the delay complained of was due to the tardiness of the attending physicians, and not to the sanitary authorities. Dr. Day thinks that more discrimination should be exercised in regard to the exclusion of children from schools, and that all the pupils living in a tenement containing ten, fifteen, or twenty families should not be quarantined because there is a single case of scarlet fever or diphtheria in the house. He calls attention to the spread of contagion caused by teachers sending children after absentees. By this practice, he says, a child often goes into the presence of a patient ill with the contagious disease that has caused its absence from school.

Sanitary Inspector Murtha reported to the Health Board yesterday that there is sewer gas in the grammar school at 116 Henry street. The pupils and teachers complain of the bad effects of the vitiated air. The number of children in the school is unusually large.

Ought Not President Tilden's Salary to be Paid?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Before placing the great American tramp on "the retired list," at a large annual salary, for life, to be paid by the people, would it not be well for the present Democratic Congress to tender to Samuel J. Tilden the two hundred thousand dollars (and interest) which such a former Congress has persisted Mr. Hayes fraudulently take? No doubt Mr. Hayes, by the approval of such a measure as this, would be glad to ease his own conscience. LIVINGSTON.

Judge Choate—A Correction.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The statement about Judge Choate of the United States District Court for this district, published in a letter in THE SUN of Friday under the heading "Have the American People Degenerated?" is an error, and does him injustice. Judge Choate was not a judicial officer in 1876, the year spoken of in the letter, nor did he at any time direct, by mandamus or otherwise, any State election inspectors "to receive, cast, and count the vote for Presidential electors of citizens of other States and residents of Territories who happened to be temporarily in New York" on election day, 1876. The friends of Judge Choate need not be told that your correspondent is also wrong in saying that the Judge endeavored for his task of knowledge of the American Constitution. Yours very respectfully, NEW YORK.

The Howard-Boswell Marriage.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In a conversation with your reporter, recently, about the announcement of the marriage of my son to Mrs. Doswell of this city, I said, among other things, that I considered it "a black-skin thing" entirely on the part of her friends. Since my arrival here I find I am mistaken on that point, and I ask you to publish this correction.

NEW ORLEANS, Dec. 15. CHAS. T. HOWARD.

Church Fairs.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Noticing of late the large number of church fairs in the various churches of Brooklyn, I would like to ask whether God ever intended His house to be used as a restaurant, bakeshop, clothing store, fancy store, grocery store, shoe store, stationery store, fancy store, grocery store, Bible is it to be used as a dry goods store. It seems to me that it is a new way to raise money. It seems to me that this is a new way against religion. I think that it is both wrong and against good moral sense. It is a great injury to all branches of churches. First they beg the goods, and then they induce the people to purchase at the fair. PARSONITE.

A Telegraph Line in China.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21.—The Consul-General of the United States at Shanghai has informed the Department of State that the Emperor of China has granted the prayer of the Viceroy at Tientsin for permission to construct a telegraph line from Shanghai to Tientsin, to be 1,200 miles in length. The route will be from Shanghai to Chinkiang, thence along the line of the Grand Canal to Tientsin. A short line of about 70 miles will also probably be constructed by the Viceroy at Nankin, to connect the capital of his province with the main one at Chinkiang. The work of setting the poles and laying the wire will be begun early next spring. It is estimated that the enterprise will cost $200,000.

More Millions Wanted for Pensions.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21.—A letter from the Commissioner of Pensions was transmitted to the Senate today, in which he said that the $32,000,000 appropriated for army and navy pensions during the current fiscal year was nearly exhausted, and that $18,282,000 more would be necessary.

THE TERRIBLE YEAR AT HAND.

The world to an end shall come
In eighteen hundred and eighty-one.
MOTHER SHIPTON'S PROPHECY.

It would be difficult to describe all the sinister predictions that have, as by common consent, been concentrated upon the coming year. The soothsayers, diviners, oracle makers, astrologers, and wizards seem to have combined to cast their spell upon it. Superstitious people of every sort, and some who are not willing to admit that they are superstitious, regard the year 1881 with more or less anxious expectation and dread. As the earth, on New Year's Day, swings out into another round about the sun, it will go to meet a host of evil omens. It will go cursed by theomancy and bibliomancy. Aeromancy and meteoromancy will glare at it from comets and shooting stars. Oneiromancy will intercept its path with visions of evil, and nomancy will shake the ominous, backward-reading numerals "1881" before it. It will be beset with scarecrow figures by arithmancy, and with menacing phrases by stichomancy. Yet there is no reason why persons of good digestion should not go to sleep on New Year's night confident that, after having encountered the average quantity of storm and sunshine, the one-horse ball that we call the world will bring them safe through the perils of its five-hundred-million-mile flight round to the starting point again.

Timid persons first began to look forward with some alarm to the year that is about to open, when, several years ago, the key to the so-called prophetic symbolism of the Great Pyramid of Egypt was made public, backed by the name and reputation of the British astronomer, Piazzi Smyth. Others, using Mr. Smyth's observations and measurements, have gone much further than he did in drawing startling inferences; but no one can read his book without perceiving how powerfully it must affect those who have the slightest leaning toward superstition or credulity. Besides, this record of explorations and experiences in the heart of Egypt's greatest marvel has all the charm and interest of Dr. Schliemann's descriptions of his discoveries in Homer's Troy. Such a book could not well be neglected by the world of readers; and by the nature of the human mind, many of its readers were sure to be imbued with its ominous dogmas. So the belief, or at least the suspicion, spread that the secret chambers of the Great Pyramid, under Divine guidance by the most mystical character in all history, Melchisedek, King of Salem, foretell, among other things, that the Christian era will end in 1881.

Mother Shipton's so-called prophecy fixes upon the same date for the end of the world. The ominous jingle of her rhymes has probably done at least as much to disturb the equanimity of credulous persons as the more elaborate vaticinations of the pyramid interpreters. Moreover, Mother Shipton is represented as foretelling that in the latter days England will "accept a Jew." As England has, with considerable emphasis, and more than once, accepted the remarkable son of old Isaac Disraeli for her Prime Minister, this has been taken as a fulfilment of the prophecy. So Lord Beaconsfield's dramatic personality is made a principal figure in the murky cloud of evil prophecy that hangs over 1881.

As if the evil eye of Mother Shipton and the mystical menace of the Great Pyramid were not enough for one poor twelvemonth to bear, the "horrors of the perihelia" have been denounced upon the coming year. About two years ago certain pamphlets were circulated about the country, purporting to be written by men of science, and predicting that awful consequences to mankind would result from all the great planets reaching their perihelia, or nearest points to the sun, together. According to these prophets the sinister effects of the perihelia were to begin making their appearance this fall, when Jupiter passed his perihelion, and next year the scythe of death was to be put to the harvest in the far east, and to sweep westward, with a swathe as broad as the continents, until it reached the Pacific Ocean. The narrow Atlantic was to be no more than a brooklet in the path of this terrible harvester. Plagues, famines, pestilences, fire, earthquakes, floods, and tornadoes were to scourge the human race until only a few remained, like Noah and his family, to repeople the earth with a sturdier and more God-fearing race.

So much alarm was caused by this hocus-pocus of pretended science and prophecy, that some real men of science—Mr. Proctor among others—were at the pains to show that so far as these predictions professed to rest upon scientific facts they were baseless. The great planets will not all be in perihelion in 1881, and they will not all be in perihelion together at any time. It is true that several of the chief planets will reach their perihelia within a few years, and that it is rare for them to be grouped so close together as they will be at one time next year. It is also true that remarkable coincidences have been observed between the existence of great storms on the sun, that produce electrical disturbances and possibly meteorological changes upon the earth, and the presence of Jupiter near his perihelion. Astronomers have also suspected that the influence of some of the other great planets upon the earth can be perceived, but they have never discovered any reason to believe that the combined forces of all the planets could, under any circumstances, produce upon the earth a thousandth part of the evil effect ascribed to them by the astrologers, if indeed they produced any evil effect whatever.

Still the astrological almanacs for next year are repeating substantially the same predictions of evil things to begin, if not to culminate, in 1881. Because, as they say, the ravages of the Black Death in the middle ages followed the nearly coincident perihelia of four great planets, they predict similar consequences from the configuration of the planets now. But neither in their premises nor their inferences does science recognize any validity.

In truth, however, the astrologers, not less than the astronomers and all star gazers, will have plenty of phenomena in the heavens to occupy their attention for the next twelve months. The sky will not present such brilliant pageants again this century. There will be a remarkable series of conjunctions, and double and triple conjunctions. The most interesting of these is the great twenty-year conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in April. This conjunction is one of the strongholds of the astrologers. As it occurs in the sign Taurus, which they say rules Turkey and Ireland, they feel safe, on account of recent occurrences, in predicting very momentous effects in those countries from the conjunction. There will also be conjunctions of Jupiter and Mars, Venus and Jupiter, Saturn and Venus, and the far-away giants Uranus and Neptune will play a part in this remarkable planetary love.

Venus will reach her greatest brightness in the spring, and will be so brilliant as to be visible at noonday. Her delicate crescent will be a favorite object in the amateur astronomer's telescope. Saturn will open still wider its wonderful rings, and will be one of the chief attractions of the evening sky for several months. Jupiter will not lose much of his present brilliancy before he becomes a morning star in April. Mars will begin to brighten in the latter part of the year, and then his snowy poles and shadowy continents will again become the admiration of those who gaze through telescopes. In short, there will be no end of attractions in the starry heavens, and all the prognostications of the soothsayers will not be able to darken the sky of 1881.

Plans of the Cornell University.

ITHACA, Dec. 21.—The Trustees of the Cornell University at a recent meeting appropriated $100,000 to increase their facilities for instruction, as follows: For the building and equipment of a physical department, $40,000; for the building and equipments of veterinary and anatomical departments, $10,000; for a greenhouse and other equipment for a botanical department, $10,000; for the library, $20,000; for the civil engineering and other departments, $10,000. J. Burkett Webb, who is now in Europe, was appointed Professor of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Mechanics.

Fearless Matt Carpenter.

From the Chicago Times.

Tally one for Carpenter of Wisconsin. He alone of all the Senate had the courage to vote against the confirmation of HAYES.

ACCUSED OF FRAUDULENT DEALING.

Proceedings by the Nevada Bank of San Francisco Against Bowie Dash & Co.

The Nevada Bank of San Francisco has obtained an attachment for $123,033.17 against Bowie Dash & Co. from Judge Donohue of the Supreme Court, on the ground, as alleged, that the firm have disposed of property with intent to defraud their creditors. George L. Brander, the agent of the bank, alleges that between Sept. 2 and Dec. 1 the firm received from or for account of the bank 7,800 bags of coffee, valued at $136,000, under a written agreement that the firm should hold the coffee in trust for the bank, and in case of a sale thereof, they would hand the the proceeds, as soon as received, to the agency of the bank; that the firm have sold the coffee, and received for it, partly cash and partly negotiable paper, to the amount of $123,033.17 over all payments made to the bank on account thereof; that the bank duly demanded from the firm the delivery of the proceeds of the coffee sold for the bank's account, but the firm have neglected and refused to pay the same over to the bank; that the negotiable paper, instead of being delivered to the bank, was disposed of by the firm in fraud of the rights of the bank, the same having been procured to be discounted by the firm, and they applied the proceeds of such discounts and the cash to their own purposes, in fraud of the rights of their creditors and the bank; that the failure to make such a delivery to the bank was a breach of the express contracts under which the coffee was received, and a wrongful conversion of personal property.

An attachment has been granted by Judge Daniels upon the property of Bowie Dash & Co., in a suit against them by the Netherlands Trade Society to recover $26,848.46 for coffee consigned to be sold on commission.

Ireland's Strength.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The tide of revolution flows onward in Ireland, submerging and cleansing the unclean cages of landlordism and British rule. False prophets and prophetesses, whether they speak or write despondingly in New York, Ireland, or elsewhere on Irish affairs, of which they know but little, are looked upon with suspicion and mistrust. A new soul has been infused into Ireland. She possesses courage, resolution, skill, an organization of immense potentiality, and a contempt of death; and manifesting to the world her destiny of independence.

In this day's SUN "An Englishman" and "A School Girl" utter prophetic sentiments about the inability of Ireland to make a fight for freedom. The Englishman, a friend of Ireland, suggests to Irishmen to forbear until Victoria dies; and then we will see a confederated republic of England, Ireland, and Scotland. But Ireland will not wait. Now is the hour, while England is sore pressed in Asia, Europe, and Africa, for Ireland's sons to arm for liberty, holding their arms as a trust wherein their hopes are centred. Prophets and prophetesses need not trouble themselves about a disarmed people attacking the soldiery and police. Possibly England thinks Ireland has too many arms, for she is desirous of taking them away. The "School Girl" would do well not to play with war or prophecy. J. McC.

Hepworth's Lecture.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I heard the Rev. Dr. Hepworth's lecture on Ireland. I cannot see, however, that he proposed any feasible plan that will ameliorate the sufferings of the Irish people which he described. He admits that "there is no room for a diversity of talent in the west of Ireland. The Irishman must remain an agriculturist or starve."

Nations, like men, become impoverished by not taking advantage of their opportunities. Where the area is too small to obtain subsistence by agricultural labor, some other mode of livelihood must be adopted or the people will suffer. If the English Government have the future welfare of the Irish people at heart, measures should be taken toward establishing manufactures in that country. The surplus population would then be drawn from the agricultural districts. The remedy for their wrong is the abolishment of landlordism. J. J. D.

Different Sorts of Religions.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Talmage says religion is dead. Which religion does Talmage mean; the religion of $10,000 a year, or that of the One who had not where to lay His head? Is the religion of Talmage or Beecher or Calvin or Wesley dead, or is the religion of Christ dead? Is it true that any Christian, once emptied of self, can die as to religion? Sectarian religion dies an easy death; it expires in a dream of icy beauty. Presbyterian religion, Methodist religion, or any other religion sectarian and not of Christ is death-struck, if not dead. But the religion of love of justice, of self-sacrifice, which follows in all the footsteps of Jesus, can never die. I see Brother Talmage has been misunderstood, and that he was alluding to a religion they keep in Pittsburgh, which has more of John Knox than of the Nazarene about it. Probably Brother Talmage means that religion, and does not mean to allude to the religion which is from above, and cannot, therefore, die. HENRY KIMBALL.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 21.

The New Capitol.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I would like to publish the true accounts of the bad work and worse management of the new Capitol. In reference to the "one stone in ten thousand," I say the Assembly chamber is cracked from top to bottom; so much so that it is pressing the court walls out, and even cracking the granite pilasters. I showed your cracks last spring to Recorder Paddock and Assemblyman-elect Herrick, and told Mr. Olcott, late Comptroller. Just think of 190,000 tons above the Assembly chamber floor, held together by nothing. I hope there is one paper that will not listen to the childish twaddle of replacing the defective stone, because all the powers of earth cannot remedy this useless sounding hall. The western columns are built about one-half on the wall, and there is not a man who understands architectural construction who would stay in the chamber three minutes if he could see the flaw of said columns. W. G. REED, Builder.

The Sprague Divorce Case.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In today's issue I see that the name of Elizabeth Rhing, or Mrs. McCue, is included in the list of those who are charged with having improper relations with Gov. Sprague. Mrs. Sprague better than any one else, knows this charge to be false. Mrs. Sprague's messenger called on my sister (Mrs. McCue) a few weeks ago, asking her to testify in Mrs. Sprague's favor, and she refused to do so, as she knew nothing that would benefit Mrs. Sprague in a court of law. Mrs. Sprague then brought this charge to detract from the value of my sister's testimony if she was called on the Governor's side. Yours respectfully, DENIS M. RHING, 1,073 Second avenue, city.

Frank Duffy's Farewell Address.

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-SECOND WARDS, ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM BUSINESS: Good-by, good folk, good-by—if I don't see you again, hello!

I find it cheaper to move than to pay rent.

Give my regards to all the little ones that helped to buy salt for my potatoes and keep the wolf from my door.

Give my best respects to all my honest, true, obliging neighbors, and tell them I am sorry to part with them; they were good and kind to me.

Give my best wishes to all the people who ever patronized me, and ask them to forgive me if ever I caused them sorrow or pain.

I hope they all will think kindly of me, now that I am going to leave them, maybe forever.

Farewell to all those friends who owe me a stamp or a nickel. If they think they want it more than I do they are welcome to keep it. I hope they will pay them as much good as it does me to pay my honest debts.

Farewell, I hope not forever, yet farewell.

My love to all. Good-by. FRANK DUFFY.

Formerly on the house that he built that was torn down. He is on place now. No pension for him.

A note addressed Frank Duffy, Central Park, will reach me.

The Electric Light in a Tunnel.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The Superintendent of the Hoosac Tunnel has anticipated your suggestion about the use of the electric light in tunnels, and is now testing the light in that big bore.

NEW YORK, Dec. 20. A. A. HAYES