NEW YORK HERALD.

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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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AMUSEMENTS THIS AFTERNOON AND EVENING.

BROADWAY THEATRE, Broadway, near Broome street.—MAZEPPA.

WOOD'S THEATRE, Broadway, opposite the St. Nicholas Hotel.—THE ELVES—CROSSING THE LINE. Matinee at 1½ o'Clock.

TONY PASTOR'S OPERA HOUSE, 201 Bowery.—SINGING, DANCING, BURLESQUES, &c.—THE OUTCAST OF KILLARNEY. Matinee at 2½ o'Clock.

SAN FRANCISCO MINSTRELS, 585 Broadway, opposite Metropolitan Hotel.—ETHIOPIAN SINGING, DANCING, &c.—JAMES STEPHENS AND HIS STAFF.

GEORGE CHRISTY'S—OLD SCHOOL OF MINSTRELSY, BALLADS, MUSICAL GEMS, &c., Fifth Avenue Opera House, Nos. 2 and 4 West Twenty-fourth street.—PETER PIPER, OR THE MAN ABOUT TOWN.

BRYANTS' MINSTRELS, Mechanics' Hall, 472 Broadway.—NEGRO COMICALITIES, BURLESQUES, &c.—THE LEARNED ELEPHANT.

IRVING HALL, Irving place.—GRAND COMPLIMENTARY CONCERT TO WALTER RUSSEL JOHNSON.

HOOLEY'S OPERA HOUSE, Brooklyn.—ETHIOPIAN MINSTRELSY—BALLADS, BURLESQUES AND PANTOMIMES.

BROOKLYN ATHENÆUM.—BLIND TOM'S SECOND CONCERT. Matinee at Three o'Clock.

DUSSELDORF GALLERY, 625 Broadway.—PAINTING OF THE VALLEY AND CITY OF MEXICO.

COOPER INSTITUTE, Astor Place.—DR. COLTON'S LECTURE ON NITROUS OXIDE GAS.

NEW YORK MUSEUM OF ANATOMY, 618 Broadway.—Open from 10 A. M. till 10 P. M.

SOMERVILLE ART GALLERY, 845 Broadway.—MR. WM. BRADFORD'S PICTURE, "SEALERS CRUSHED BY ICEBERGS."

TRIPLE SHEET.

New York, Wednesday, May 16, 1866.

TO ADVERTISERS.

Advertisements to insure a proper classification should be brought in before half-past eight o'clock in the evening.

THE NEWS.

CONGRESS.

In the Senate yesterday a bill changing the time of holding the United States Courts in Virginia to the first Monday in May and December was passed. The bill to establish a system of quarantine was passed, with an amendment striking out the words "President of the United States" wherever they occur and inserting "the Secretary of the Treasury." The bill to prevent smuggling on the Northern frontier was passed. The President's message returning the Colorado admission bill without his signature, and inclosing his objections, was received, but the reading of it was postponed until this morning.

In the House a joint resolution relative to the appointments to West Point was passed. The bills appended to the report of the Reconstruction Committee were made special orders for the 29th and 30th inst. The bill amending the organic acts of certain Territories was passed. The Tax bill was then considered and several verbal and unimportant amendments inserted.

THE CITY.

A grand Fenian demonstration took place at Jones' Wood yesterday in honor of the arrival of James Stephens, C. O. F. B. About fifteen thousand persons were present, and Mr. Stephens, in a long speech, gave a detailed account of the operations of the organization from its inception to the present time, and at its close stated that the object of his visit to America was for the purpose of restoring harmony and union between the two factions, and promised that active operations would commence in Ireland for its liberation from English rule before the close of the present year. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed, and Mr. Stephens received a most cordial welcome from the vast assemblage. Mr. Stephens was the only speaker, and on the conclusion of his remarks the audience dispersed.

The Board of Health met yesterday. From the reports of the Sanitary Superintendent and the Bureau of Vital Statistics—which will be found in the proceedings—it will be seen that the work of sanitary reform is being pressed forward with vigor, and a marked decrease in the weekly mortuary report is noted as among the gratifying results which have been attained. The Governor's proclamation was also received, which grants the additional powers asked for by the Board to remove the underground cellar population and execute such other measures as they may deem necessary for the preservation of health.

At the meeting of the Board of Excise yesterday afternoon five hundred additional licenses were granted, of which number ninety-one were for Brooklyn. An interesting correspondence which took place between the District Attorney and President Schultz in relation to the application of the latter for permission for the Attorney of the Excise Board to appear before Justice Ledwith for the prosecution of certain persons recently arrested for violation of that law, will be found in another column.

The Board of Supervisors met yesterday. Supervisor Ely moved that if the Governor should deem it necessary to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of Coroner Collin before the next election, that he be solicited to appoint Dr. William Schirmer to the office, as he was the candidate at the last election who received the largest vote except that given Coroner Collin. The motion was lost. An invitation to attend the Fenian demonstration in Jones' Wood was accepted. The Board then adjourned till Tuesday next at two o'clock P. M.

The trial of Dr. Henry Otto Claus for the murder of Charles Carson, at a "free and easy," in West Thirty-sixth street, in December last, was resumed yesterday. Testimony for the defence was introduced for the purpose of showing that the fatal blow was inflicted in self defence. The summing up will take place to-day, Mr. Gunning G. Bedford appearing for the prosecution and James T. Brady for the accused.

An action was tried in the Court of Common Pleas, before Judge Cardozo, yesterday, on a promissory note alleged to have been made by Mr. Wm. O. D. McIntosh, a son-in-law of Commodore Shubrick. The consideration money was advanced by Mr. John R. Ford to pay the expenses of a trip to China, which Mr. McIntosh was advised to take for the benefit of his health. Mr. McIntosh dying in China, his brother, Angus, was sued as endorser of the note, and a verdict was given in favor of plaintiff for the full amount claimed.

The Tilt divorce suit again occupied the attention of Judge Barnard yesterday in the Supreme Court, Chambers. On a motion made to compel the defendant to file security for alimony and the expenses of the suit Judge Barnard granted an order directing the Sheriff to hold the defendant to bail in the sum of ten thousand dollars, on affidavits showing that he had threatened to sell out his property and leave the State.

Civil suits have been commenced in the Supreme Court by the City Railroad Companies against several of the strikers who attacked drivers during the late disturbances, and orders of arrest have been issued against them.

A case was up before Judge Barnard yesterday, in the Supreme Court, Chambers, which developed some painful facts. The complainant is Miss Kate Busteed, who alleges that in March last she was married to a young man named James T. Wilson, and that she subsequently ascertained he had a wife in Bristol, England. She is the niece of Judge Busteed, formerly of this city. A divorce has been granted between the parties on the alleged connivance of the defendant, who took this course, as it appeared, in order to save himself from a criminal prosecution. An application has been made by the father of the lady to set aside the decree. Further hearing in the case was set down for Thursday next.

Anne Birdsal, a waiter girl in the Casino saloon under the St. Nicholas Hotel, was awarded one hundred and fifty dollars and costs against the keeper of the saloon, in the Marine Court, before Judge Gross, yesterday. The proprietor, it was alleged, beat her and charged her with keeping some of the tickets she had received.

Judgment for five hundred dollars was awarded to Leopold Herz in the Marine Court, before Judge Gross, yesterday, against Anthony Boyer, who it was alleged had wrongfully detained certain articles of gold and silver belonging to the plaintiff.

Peter A. Burley, formerly a member of the Metropolitan Police, entered his father's store on Monday evening, and, drawing a pistol on him, pulled the trigger; but it missed fire. A struggle ensued between father and son, when the former secured the pistol and gave his son in charge of the police. He pleaded guilty to assault with intent to kill, and was committed.

The Cunard steamship Java, from Queenstown May 6, is due at this port with European news two days later.

The fine new steamship Merrimac, commanded by Captain Edward Van Sice, now belonging to the North American Lloyd's line, will sail to-morrow, 17th inst., at noon, from pier 46 North river, for Bremen via Cowes. The mails for the German States and the northern part of Europe will close at the Post Office at half-past ten in the morning.

Three ferry leases between this city and the Jersey shore, for ten years, with dock privileges on this side, were sold yesterday. One of them is to be a new ferry, which, it is alleged, will run to Hoboken in connection with the one to Fort Lee.

The annual election of officers of the Mercantile Library Association took place at Clinton Hall yesterday.

A woman of intemperate habits, named Caroline Southerland, was put in a cell in a station house on Monday evening, and on Tuesday was found dead.

The stock market was strong yesterday. Governments were quiet and steady. Gold weakened and closed at 129⅝.

There was not a great deal of activity in trade circles yesterday, yet there was considerable buoyancy, especially in imported goods, which, as a general thing, were held with firmness at full prices. Domestic produce was irregular, and prices fluctuated considerably.

The market for beef cattle ruled firmer under a good demand and moderate receipts, and prices were from ½c. to 1c. per pound higher, varying from 13c. to 18c., with some very fair offerings at the down town yards as low as 11c. The bulk of the offerings sold at from 14c. to 17c. Milch cows were irregular, prices varying from $35 to $95 each. Veals were in demand at from 9c. to 12c., with scallawags as low as 8c. Sheep and lambs were steady at from $4 to $9 a $10. Hogs were heavy and lower, varying from 10c. to 10¾c. The total receipts were 4,972 beeves, 67 cows, 1,795 veals, 15,181 sheep and lambs, and about 9,000 hogs.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The President yesterday signed the bill amending the Habeas Corpus act, protecting military officers from prosecutions for acts done while in the execution of their official duties.

The reception given by President Johnson and his two daughters, at the White House last night, was one of the largest assemblages of rank and beauty ever seen before in the capital. The army, the navy, the Senate and House, nearly every foreign nation and, it is estimated, every State and Territory in the Union, North and South, were represented in the brilliant throng.

Our correspondent at Fortress Monroe says it is rumored there that President Johnson has sent a special message requesting a report as to the health of Jeff Davis, in consequence, he presumes, of statements made by Secretary McCulloch.

Our representative, yesterday, was by invitation admitted to an interesting and lengthy interview with General Santa Anna. The General denied the allegations published against him, and utterly repudiates all connivance with Maximilian. He intends to despatch a staff officer to Juarez to-day and send a communication to Romero explanatory of his intentions in this country.

Zeno Burnham, the mock auctioneer, has been pardoned by Governor Fenton.

The bill legalizing liquor selling was defeated in Massachusetts yesterday by a large majority.

Colonel Jacquess, of Illinois, who has been under trial for murder, at Louisville, for the past week, was acquitted yesterday.

A fire at North Royalton, Vermont, destroyed the house of Mr. Burbank, on Monday night, and he and two girls, one his adopted daughter and the other a temporary visitor, were burned to death in the flames.

A fire in Salem, Massachusetts, on Monday night, destroyed the Lynde block and other buildings, doing damage to the amount of seventy-five thousand dollars.

The Administration, Congress, General Grant and the Next Presidency.

There is a hitch between Congress and the administration. Reconstruction is the difficulty. The President has adopted his plan, which is denounced by Congress, and Congress has proclaimed its plan, which is opposed by the President. There is an "irrepressible conflict" between the two departments, and yet the reconstruction scheme of Congress in all its essential features is but a rehash of the scheme of the administration.

After sitting for five months upon a nest full of all sorts of reconstruction eggs, good and bad, white, black, blue and speckled, the joint Committee of Fifteen have hatched out the small brood of chickens over which the Senate is now clucking. And what are they? They embrace a constitutional amendment declaring, first, in behalf of all citizens of all races the equal protection of the laws. This is a superfluous safeguard, or the Civil Rights bill is a mockery. Secondly, where suffrage is restricted on account of race or color the enumeration of the people for Congressional representation shall be proportionately reduced. This is, substantially, the amendment suggested months ago by President Johnson. Thirdly, that neither the United States nor any State shall pay or assume any debts of the rebellion, nor any claim for emancipated slaves. All this has been provided for in the actual reorganization of the late rebel States under the President's instructions. The plan of Congress, by bill, further provides to exclude from all federal offices certain classes of leading and active participants in the rebellion, a provision which is also based upon the administration policy.

Thus far, then, the plan of Congress is but a clumsy revamping and half-soling of the President's plan. The point of divergence is the third section of the joint committee's amendment, which proposes to disfranchise till the 4th of July, 1870, all persons concerned in giving voluntary aid and comfort to the late rebellion. Strangely enough, too, this proposition passed the House against a majority the other way. But how? The answer to this question solves the whole case. There are three factions in Congress—the radical republicans, the moderate republicans and the copperheads. The radical faction and the copperhead faction are each operating on an independent tack for the next Presidency. The moderadoes, or third faction, are cutting in and out for the spoils of the present administration, but at every blast of the party trumpet of Stevens they fall into the wake of the radicals. Mr. Raymond is a specimen brick of these so-called conservatives. Most conspicuous among the opponents of this aforesaid third section in the House, his adhesion to it in his vote, under the whip of Stevens, was the most prominent feature in the day's proceeding.

It is the next Presidency that has divided this Congress into these three wrangling factions—the next Presidency and the spoils of the present administration. But if we can settle now, as we think we can, this question of the next Presidency, we are satisfied that Congress will find it easy work to fall in fairly with President Johnson's Southern policy. He has declared that he is not a candidate for another term, and we believe him. He is not, therefore, engineering for another election. The copperheads are noisy in their admiration of him; but who imagines that they dream of making him their candidate? The moderate republicans go with the administration for the spoils of to-day, but with the radicals for the plunder of to-morrow.

One of Mr. Seward's newspaper organs has warned the republican party that if this thing of the restoration of the Southern States be not settled before the Presidential election there will be civil war. But we say it will be settled, if we can settle now the Presidential question, and we believe that in the public mind this question is already settled. General Grant is the man. A million of Union soldiers are waiting to give him their suffrages, and another million or more of the Union men of the war are ready to back their soldiers. Convention or no convention, he is good for the solid vote of the Northern States and for some of the Southern States. No divisions or reconstructions of parties or States can touch him, because he is the champion and the candidate of the great Union party of the war. The case is very simple. This party owes to General Grant a heavy debt. If they cannot pay it they intend to recognize it by his election to the White House in 1868, and because they know that he is the man for the place, especially in the reconstruction of our foreign relations, which will then be the main work in hand.

Accordingly, leaving the copperheads out of the question, the inquiry recurs what have the radicals to gain from their present factious opposition to President Johnson and his policy, or what have they to lose by supporting him when the public sentiment of the whole country is in favor of his plan of reconstruction, and when Stevens himself has been constrained to adopt it in order to carry his additional restrictions? Why all this sapping and mining for the next Presidency, when that affair is a foregone conclusion? It is a radical blunder to be hedging and ditching against Andrew Johnson as a Presidential candidate. Common sense, as well as common justice, should teach this Congress to abandon its factious absurdities and all such stultifications as that third section and that Colorado bill, and to deal honestly with an honest and consistent administration.

The Freedmen's Bureau and General Howard's Explanation.

We publish to-day a letter from Major General O. O. Howard, Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, in which that officer attempts an explanation in regard to charges made about the workings of the Bureau in the Southern States. We also give a letter from Assistant Commissioner Whittlesey, in charge of the Freedman's Bureau in Raleigh, North Carolina, in which he acknowledges the fact that a freedman was brutally shot by one of the *attachés* of the Bureau; but neglects to say anything about other charges preferred in the report of Generals Steedman and Fullerton. It will be seen that General Howard admits one of the main accusations; that is, that the chief and subordinate and representatives of the Bureau in certain localities were "running plantations" and furnishing rations to their negro hands at government expense, for their own personal benefit. Nor does he deny or explain the charge that the same officers were bartering away the services of the freed negroes and allowing them to be sent away from home associations and separated from family ties, under circumstances of as much cruelty as ever characterized similar acts on the part of the late rebellious slaveholders. The Commissioner, when he refers to the high personal character of a Rev. Horace James, one of the managers of the Bureau in a Southern State, neglects to mention another reverend gentleman, a Rev. Mr. Fitz, also a bureau superintendent, whose inhuman conduct toward the poor blacks under his charge is only rivalled by the Andersonville atrocities. He entirely ignores the existence of the specific charges of corruption, malfeasance and cruelty alleged in the report of Generals Steedman and Fullerton, and dismisses the whole report under the sweeping declaration that the friends of the Bureau may rest assured that every shadow of accusation of complicity in crime on the part of the officers of the Bureau in North Carolina "is utterly without foundation." Generals Steedman and Fullerton are men of honor; they bear a military reputation beyond reproach, and no soldier can ever do so against whom a charge of a wilful want of veracity can fairly rest. General Howard is surely committing a breach of military etiquette when he makes a public statement of this kind against officers who speak from a knowledge of facts obtained on the spot, while the Commissioner himself is delivering sympathizing speeches to negroes in this city, far from the scene of operations. The General says nothing about General Ely, of the Bureau, running five plantations in South Carolina at government expense—an interesting fact that is just being ventilated. In short, General Howard seems to have adopted the plan of the radical newspapers, and by raising a hue and cry about Generals Steedman and Fullerton confining their investigations to the opponents of the institution as far as they have gone, to screen the misdeeds of those into whose hands the administration of the concerns of the Bureau in the Southern States is intrusted.

The whole system is a bad one badly managed. It reminds us of the times when Warren Hastings was the British Governor General in India. History tells us that Hastings was unscrupulous and cruel, but resolute. He depopulated whole districts by his exactions and committed acts of signal injustice. But, like the radicals in Congress, success followed him. He defeated opposition in his council, overawed the minority, refused to obey the orders of the Board of Directors of the East India Company, and was denied the support of the home government. Edmund Burke, in 1786, brought articles of impeachment against him. He was charged with numerous acts of oppression, with desolating whole regions of British domain, with peculation and corruption, with exciting useless wars, and with various acts dishonoring the British name. But he so adroitly managed to flatter the British that public opinion changed in his favor, and instead of the charges being sustained, they were all dismissed. It would, no doubt, be the same with our radical Congress were charges brought against any officer of the Freedmen's Bureau, from the highest to the lowest. No matter how plain a case of cruelty, peculation, corruption or oppression could be made out against any of the officers of the Freedmen's Bureau; no matter how clear a case of dishonoring the American name, which these men are continually doing; no matter how shamelessly they may work for the eternal dismemberment of the Union, the radicals in Congress would raise a cry, "It is an opposition trick," [illegible] Bureau would be allowed to go [illegible] and the [illegible] scot free. It is the duty of these men [illegible] see that the law of Congress, imperfect and bad as it may be, is properly and humanely enforced; that injustice is not done; that the public good and resources are not made to subserve private ends, and that, instead of keeping up irritation and harassing the feelings of a conquered but proud and brave people, they do all in their power to restore harmony between the North and the South, and plant the Union upon a firmer foundation than ever. Without they do this, and unless they can furnish better evidences of the beneficial workings of the system than those now before the public, the whole system must eventually be abandoned.

The Evils of the National Banks and Mismanagement of Government Finances.

The rottenness of the Merchants' National Bank at Washington ought to arouse the people to a consciousness of the evils of this national bank system. There have been some failures before, but this is the worst of any. We may very justly denounce the men who have been concerned in these failures, and those who have been guilty of such gross mismanagement of other people's money. In this last case of the Merchants' National Bank there seems to be good ground for a criminal prosecution; and it is to be hoped that, if the government can reach any of the parties in this way, they may be arrested and tried forthwith. The managers of the bank, Bayne & Co., Paymaster Paulding, and every one concerned in this infamous transaction, should certainly be overhauled without gloves. But it is not this particular case that concerns us so much as it is the whole rotten system of national banks. They are a snare for confiding depositors and a fraud upon the country. We have been endeavoring to make the people understand this for some time past, and now we think their attention will be aroused. There are undoubtedly many sound banks, and particularly in this city, organized under the National Bank act, but this is not because they are national banks. They were sound before as old banks, and are sound independent of their existence as national banks. But throughout the country the new system gives facilities for the wildest speculation and swindling.

These national banks have not been long in existence and have greater advantages than banks ever had before both to preserve their credit and make money; yet we see by the late failures that they may be as rotten as the worst wildcat banks. The people have been disposed to regard them as safe as the Sub-Treasury itself because they are called national banks, and have no doubt trusted them with deposits to a very great extent on that account. It is seen by this last failure that an agent of the government placed a very large sum in the hands of one of them and lost it. Others may do the same. We caution the public not to be too confiding. The bonds deposited as security for their circulation are no security for deposits. It is the duty of the government to protect the people in this respect, especially as the banks have been given a sort of national character by the legislation of Congress. If there be any law in existence by which these institutions can be overhauled they ought to be thoroughly ventilated at once. If there be not such a law Congress ought to pass one immediately. Let all their transactions be exhibited to the public at short and regular intervals, and let the government have an inspecting and supervisory power over them. The sooner they are put out of existence the better; but while they exist under the authority of the general government it is the imperative duty of the government to see that the people be not swindled by them, for they have been brought into existence by and in the name of the government, and the people trust them on that account.

It may require a little time to remodel our banking system, but the process ought to be commenced at once. The present national bank system has not yet got so deeply rooted as to create much disarrangement in eradicating it. Let the monstrous evil be uprooted, then, before it acquires too much power. It has all the elements for becoming more powerful and dangerous than the old National Bank. Congress ought, therefore, during the present session to repeal the act creating the national banks. It ought to provide for the withdrawal of their circulation and substituting for that its own legal tender greenbacks, which would be a far more desirable and sounder currency. The amount thus issued in greenbacks, in place of the national bank currency, would buy up or retire the interest paying bonds now deposited by the national banks as security for their circulation, and save from fifteen to twenty millions of dollars a year to the country. At the same time we should be saving this vast amount the people would have a currency they much prefer—a currency based upon and guaranteed by the government itself—a currency which would approximate to a specie standard much sooner than any other. The entire volume of the currency would not be increased; it would be only substituting one kind for another—the national bank for the greenback, the less valuable for a more valuable one.

The more we look at this matter the more we are struck with the glaring inconsistency of lending the national banks and the capitalists connected with them money in the form of national currency—a currency based upon the credit of the government—without any charge, interest or advantage, while at the same time it is paying five per cent interest to these capitalists for money it does not need. We say lending money to the national banks, or letting them have the use of it for nothing, because the government pays these banks interest on the bonds which are pledged for the currency, and because the government itself ought to have the profits on the circulation of that currency which it now gives to these banks. In fact, the government makes a gift to a class of capitalists of some twenty millions of dollars a year under the act of Mr. Chase creating the national banks, without the least equivalent. The people of course have to pay this indirectly. This is the worst kind of class legislation. It is enriching a great moneyed monopoly at the expense of the people. If the amount thus lavished upon the pet institution of Mr. Chase and the radicals were saved, as it might be, it would, at compound interest, liquidate the national debt in forty years. The whole system of our finances is wrong in inception, wrong in the foundation, and both dangerous and ruinous in its consequences. A change is greatly needed; and we hope members of Congress will educate themselves upon the subject so as to remodel the whole [illegible] at an early day. [illegible] matter which is worthy of [illegible] notice, now that we are to[illegible] ing on the subject of our national finances. The government has been paying five per cent on deposits made in the Treasury. It pays this for the use of the money of individuals as bankers do. It lends its own money, in the form of the national bank currency, at the same time, for nothing. Such inconsistency in financial operations is without a parallel in modern times. The men who make the laws upon such matters, and the Treasury officials who make regulations regarding them, have the crudest notions. All they do seems to be for the benefit of the bankers, or a moneyed monopoly. They act as if they were the agents of the banks and capitalists and not the servants of the public. They have but one idea, that of banking for the profit of individuals. They cannot divest their minds of counting-house notions when managing great questions of national finance and currency. Yet, strange to say, if they were to act upon the same principle as managers of banks as they do in acting for the government, they would soon ruin the business committed to their hands.

It is reported that the five per cent interest that has been allowed on deposits is to be reduced to four per cent. This may be very well; and we do not see why the government need pay interest on anything except the debt and actual loans. The amount of money deposited in the Treasury by individuals is of little if any advantage to the government, while it may be a great convenience to the depositors. It is worth something to have one's money in such a perfectly secure place; and the certificates of deposit, being made transferable, are very convenient in trade, saving the trouble and expense the transfer of specie would involve. The government does not need this money if the Treasury Department be properly managed; then why pay interest for it? The benefit is all on the side of those who make the deposits for their own convenience. Banks pay an interest on permanent deposits, or on such as can only be drawn out within a given period, because they use the money in business and make a profit out of it; but the government does not use the money in that way, and does not need it at all. To pay these depositors interest, therefore, seems unreasonable. It is in keeping with our general crude and defective system of financial management.

DIVORCING BY REFEREES AND STAR CHAMBER DECREES.—The process of divorcing married parties by decision of referees and special decrees of courts in chambers is becoming so frequent as to involve a serious question as to the propriety of this mode of separating man and wife and its moral effect upon the community. A few days since we had the case of Tilt versus Tilt in chambers, in which the defendant husband alleges that the plaintiff wife is urged through the influences of spiritualism to seek a divorce. The parties are wealthy, and supposed to be respectable, the defendant being charged with receiving an annual income amounting to from thirty to thirty-five thousand dollars—a sufficient amount, in most cases, to secure the stamp of "respectability." This case has thus far been heard only in chambers, principally by affidavits, the complaining and defending parties both being heard through counsel. The case has now assumed a shape in which the Judge (Barnard) has concluded to set it down for some early day, to be heard in open court. Some months ago a female spiritualist lecturer, who was making a great deal of money, got rid of her husband through a star chamber decree in Brooklyn. One of our courts in chambers has now on hand the case of Saxton versus Saxton, in which an effort is made to deprive a minister of the gospel of his better or worser half by a decision of referees, without the defendant having had a particle of intimation that such an action was going on, other than what he ascertained through the law reports of a newspaper. The grounds of divorce in this case are based upon the alleged fact that the husband has visited certain immoral places in certain streets, in regard to which he solemnly declares he has not the slightest knowledge. The witness upon these allegations did not appear when the case was up, and counsel stated he could not be found. Whereupon Judge Barnard declared that "in future he should compel all witnesses in divorce suits to come before him and give their evidence in open court. There should be no more references by him. If people are too 'respectable' to come into court, let them keep out of it."

We believe this determination to be a proper one. The referee system of procuring divorces is a corrupt and dangerous one. It existed for a long time in England, but we believe it has been abandoned, and except where all parties agree all divorce cases are now tried in that country in open court. The English papers are filled with reports of such trials, and when the parties have any public notoriety—and several of the kind have figured within the past few years—the ample columns of the London press furnish most copious details of the evidence. We have no doubt many cruel and arbitrary decrees of divorce are rendered through the star chamber and referee system which are never heard of by the public. It operates especially hard in the cases of wives who, ignorant of the law and without means, are divorced from inhuman husbands upon caprice or frivolous and fraudulent pretexts, without a summons or any notification that such a case is pending. We have seen how wives, influenced by religious or spiritual fanaticism, or overwhelmed by parental authority and discipline, have consented to secret actions of divorce from husbands who certainly, it would appear from their sworn affidavits, are entitled to some opportunity for defending themselves and their reputations against damaging allegations in affidavits which any pettifogging and unscrupulous lawyer may invent. We hope the example of Judge Barnard will be followed in all divorce cases coming before our courts, and the star chamber and referee system altogether abolished.

WANTED—ANOTHER HEAD CENTRE.—We are flooded at this time with head centres, but are still deficient in one department. Stephens is Head Centre of the Fenians, Santa Anna of the Mexicans, Gran of the Opera, Connolly at the Custom House and Thad Stevens in Congress; but the Excise Board is without a competent head. Sound judgment and a knowledge of the law positively required of all [illegible] No country referee [illegible] applicants.

SENATOR STEWART ON RECONSTRUCTION.—If Senator Stewart, of Nevada, does not succeed in reconstructing the Union it will not be because he does not make the effort. A few weeks since he introduced a plan of reconstruction at the suggestion of Hangman Foote. [illegible] days afterwards he proposed a modification. A few [illegible] did not suit in all particulars, and he came forward with another amendment. Our Washington despatches of yesterday announced that he had presented still another amendment. It seems though he ought to get something to suit by this time, and make himself famous as the great pacificator, which he appears to be laboring so hard to accomplish. As none of his projects will answer we advise him to make one more effort and offer the plan of President Johnson as a substitute for his own and all others now before Congress. This is the most sensible and practical way for him to make himself useful.

City Intelligence.

AUCTION SALE OF FERRY LEASES.—The rights to operate three ferries between this city and New Jersey, for ten years from the 1st of June next, together with the dock privileges on the New York side, were sold yesterday at the City Hall, under the direction of Comptroller Brennan. The leases disposed of were those of the Jersey City ferry, at Cortlandt street of the Weehawken ferry, at Forty-second street, and of a proposed new ferry from the foot of Spring street to any point on the New Jersey shore that may be found practicable. The lease of the Cortlandt street ferry was first offered, and was sold at $7,500 a year, to the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Company, the present owners. The auctioneer said that this franchise was worth $40,000. The lease of the ferry to be established at the foot of Spring street was next offered, and after some lively bidding was finally sold for $8,000. The lease of the Forty-second street ferry was the last one put up, and was sold to the Weehawken Ferry Company for $330. The loft over Franklin Market was then disposed of for five years for $1,625 a year, and thus ended the sale. It is understood that the new ferry to Hoboken will be established soon, and will run in connection with the ferry to Fort Lee.

MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION—ELECTION OF OFFICERS.—The annual election of the officers of the Mercantile Library Association took place yesterday, at Clinton Hall. The polls were open from eight o'clock, A. M., till nine o'clock, P. M., and during the entire day business was kept up briskly by the numerous friends of the respective candidates. When the polls closed at nine o'clock in the evening there were yet several hundred voters crowding forward, eager to deposit their ballots, but who found themselves "too late at the fair."

The election resulted in the choice of the following officers:—President, Aaron C. Ailen; Vice President, A. Judson Stone; Corresponding Secretary, Nathaniel D. White; Recording Secretary, George B. Emory; Treasurer, Samuel B. Lyon; Directors, Charles H. Patrick, Seymour A. Bunce, William L. Bailey, E. T. Norton, Geo. T. Arnoux, John M. Coulter, Edward G. Mathurin.

MEETING OF THE STREET CLEANING COMMISSIONERS.—At a meeting of the commission for cleaning the streets, held at the Mayor's office yesterday at ten A. M., a resolution was passed authorizing the payment of the semi-monthly contractors. Mr. Jackson Schultz concurred in the resolution.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT.—The commencement exercises connected with the law school of Columbia College will take place this evening at the rooms of the Historical Society, corner of Eleventh street and Second avenue. In addition to the valedictory and alumni orations an address will be delivered by Mr. C. P. Kirkland. The customary degrees will also be conferred upon the members of the graduating class and the annual prizes awarded.

A LUMBER PILE NUISANCE.—The attention of the Police Commissioners is called to a nuisance existing at the corner of Bethune and Greenwich streets. It consists of a pile of lumber standing on the north side of Bethune street, convenient to some shade trees and partially covering the sidewalk. The obstruction in itself is bad enough, but it is made still worse for the very respectable neighborhood by being converted into a place of nightly rendezvous for a number of shameless persons of both sexes, who scandalize the ladies and gentlemen passing by their actions and obscene conversation. It would be well for the Metropolitan Police to remove the lumber and thus break up the concern.

LAUGHING GAS.—Dr. Colton will give one of his exhibitions at the Cooper Institute this evening, at which twelve gentlemen and six ladies are to inhale the exhilarating element.

DEATH IN A CELL.—On Monday evening officer Mooney, of the Fifth precinct, arrested Caroline Southerland, a woman of intemperate habits, on the charge of having stolen a silver watch, worth twenty-one dollars from her employer, Mr. Charles C. Ronald, living at No. 2 Desbrosses street. Caroline was placed in a cell, where, at four o'clock yesterday morning, doorman Ferris discovered her in a dying condition. Police Surgeon Kennedy was called, but before he reached the station Caroline was dead. Coroner Gamble was notified to hold an inquest.

Musical.

DR. CUTLER'S CHORAL FESTIVAL.

One of the grandest and most soul-stirring musical entertainments given this season in the metropolis was presented to a large and critical audience last night at Irving Hall. A number of selections from Mendelssohn's Elijah constituted one part of the programme. Master Todd's rendering of the grand air "Hear ye, Israel," was admirable in every respect. The choruses, conducted by Mr. George W. Morgan, were given with a precision and expression such as no chorus of mixed voices could supply. Those sixty boy sopranos with young, clear, fresh and pure voices, supported by forty tenors and basses and accompanied by Dr. Cutler on the organ, and Messrs. Gilder and Johnston on the two grand pianos, should be heard by all lovers of music in this city in the wonderful chorus, "Thanks be to God; He loveth the thirsty land." The words came forth from the hundred voices as distinct as if from one; not the slightest shade of expression was wanting, and, above all, at every pause no one could detect a want of unity or precision. It seemed as if a polyphonic chord was struck on some mighty instrument by one master hand. The dialogue between Elijah and the youth was sung by Mr. George Aiken, basso, and Master Raeburn. The immortal composer, had he been present last night, would have been much better pleased with Dr. Cutler's vocalists than he was at the rehearsals of the Oratorio at Exeter Hall, where a most unruly and inefficient chorus almost drove him mad. The chorus at Irving Hall had no sluggish interpreters among them. Too much of the vocal music we hear in New York is only mechanically artistic, but this chorus made their hearers feel the spirit of Mendelssohn. Dr. Cutler deserves the utmost praise for the efficiency of his antiphonal choir. On Thursday evening the same programme will be offered. It is a pity that there can be only two such performances given this season. They should be continued every night during the present or following week, as when their merits are once known to the music-loving public Irving Hall will not be able to hold the audiences seeking admission to them.

MISS FLORENCE RICE'S CONCERT.

It is not unfrequently an unpleasant task to attend a first appearance. The attempt to force upon the public singers of limited attainments and pianists of questionable proficiency is so often renewed that of late few connoisseurs have ventured to cull the first fruits—sweet or bitter—of a début. Nevertheless, by some unaccountable caprice on the part of the public, a large and appreciative assembly gathered last evening at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and welcomed a novice to the concert room, who soon proved herself worthy the applause which was liberally bestowed on her. Miss Florence Rice, the débutante, possesses a rich contralto voice of extended compass, almost perfect evenness, and great flexibility. The notes of the lower register are somewhat fuller than the upper notes, the gradation, however, being nearly uniform and unbroken. The first effort, a cavatina "*Ah! o'estinto*," by Mercadante, was admirably adapted to bring out the richness of the singer's voice, however little popularity may accrue to the composition chosen for that purpose. Having been encored, as in Rossini's duo "Dark Day of Horror," and in a second duo from *La Favorita*, she gave us a closing solo, a sweetly monotonous song, by Hays, "Evangeline," which she rendered with great depth of expression and excellent taste. The programme comprised, beside the above named morceaux, a canzonetta by Ricci, "Sulla poppa del mio brik," which even Mr. S. C. Campbell's admirable voice failed to drag beyond the pale of mediocrity as a musical production, and a cavatina from *Nabucco*, sung by Mrs. Marie Abbott; Perring's "Beware," given with great brio by Mr. Castle, whose voice and method are constantly improving, and a very commonplace song, "I've Brought Thee an Ivy Leaf," sung by Mrs. Rogers, whose mezzo-soprano is of good compass, but lacks in a measure, flexibility and sweetness. Madame Eugenie de Roode Rice, the pianist, a debutante in this city, possesses but few of the attainments requisite to justify her claims to our consideration as an artist. She displayed neither power nor brilliancy of execution nor any knowledge of the science of shading, her performance being but the uninspired interpretation of ideas which she cannot or does not appreciate. The evening was brought to a close by the quartet from Martha, "Good Night," which Miss Rice, Mrs. Rogers, and Messrs. Castle and Campbell gave with rather more notes than Flotow would care to bear bestowed upon this particular composition. Mr. Geo. W. Colby acted as conducting throughout the concert, and was efficient as ever.