

MISCELLANEOUS.

**EXCELLENT SENSE.**—Frances D. Gage of St. Louis, a woman of rare good sense, whose writings in prose and verse have won for her an enviable reputation, makes about the worst-looking and most illegible manuscript, that ever puzzled and vexed a compositor, or tormented a proof-reader. In a recent letter to the *Woman's Advocate* she thus "owns up":

"Dear friends of the *Advocate*, I write the worst hand in the world; can't read it myself when it gets dry:

The T's are not crossed, the I's are not dotted. Some words are expunged, and others are blotted. And some are spelled wrong, or letters left out; One scarcely can tell what I'm writing about. My capital letters are all on a spree; Every B is an L, every L is a B; The P's and the Q's are exactly alike; The M's, N's, and U's are out on a strike; Some letters are large, and some very small; And the words hop about, like straws in a squall; No wonder, the poor girls can't read it at all.

"You will ask why I do not reform myself. I can only answer that I do try, constantly; every letter, every line I write, I think of it, and am ever striving, seemingly to no purpose. Till thirty years o'd, I had never a serious thought about the matter—had taught myself to write—was a constant scribbler for my own amusement, and fixed my bad habits by years of practice, which it now seems impossible to change. Now a word to the young: Strive in the beginning to write well—that is, a clearly legible hand—beauty or flourish is not so essential. A bad, careless handwriting is a source of annoyance to both the writer and receiver of manuscript. It deprives the letter of a friend of much of its relish, if it is so scrawled as to cause real trouble and guessing to make it out. A business letter, badly written, often is cause of great pecuniary loss. For a public writer, the extent of the misfortune can hardly be estimated. Habits are stubborn things, and may not be easily broken, and with a majority, the handwriting is made by habit; and many it will cost hours of persevering trial to attain excellence in this branch of education. But it is worth much, very much time and pains."

**THE HOUSEHOLD IN OLDEN TIMES.**—A servant who is absent from prayers to be fined one penny; and the same sum for leaving the door open. A fine of two pence from Lady-day to Michaelmas, for all who are in bed after seven, or out after nine. A fine of one penny for any bed unmade, fire unlit, or candle-box uncleaned after eight. A fine of four pence for any man waiting without a trencher, or who is absent at a meal. For any one breaking any of the butler's glasses, twelve pence. A fine of two pence for any one who has not laid the table for dinner by half-past ten or the supper by six. A fine of four pence for any one absent without leave. For any man striking another, a fine of one penny. For any follower for visiting the cook, one penny. A fine of one penny for any man appearing in a foul shirt, broken hose, untied shoes, or torn doublet. A fine of one penny for any stranger's room left for four hours, after he be dressed. A fine of one penny, if the hall be not cleansed by eight in the winter and seven in the summer. The porter to be fined one penny, if the court gate be not shut during meals. A fine of three pence if the stairs are not cleansed every Friday after dinner. All these fines were deducted by the steward at the quarterly payment of the men's wages.

**FORTELLING THE WEATHER.**—E. Meriam of Brooklyn, New York, who has been called the "clerk of the weather," and who for twenty years has made himself a martyr to meteorology by taking hourly observations of the thermometer, barometer, &c., thus strips the "weatherwise" of their gift of prophecy:—With all my practice and experience in observing atmospheric changes, and recording hour by hour and day by day thermometrical and meteorological observations, and in connection with simultaneous observations made and recorded elsewhere, I feel more and more convinced, that it is not in the power of any human being to determine even a single day in advance what changes will take place in the atmosphere.

**A FRENCH STEAMER BURNED BY ETHER.**—The French steam-ship *La France*, during the month of October, was burnt up in Bahia harbor. Frenchmen are acute in chemistry, but they sometimes overdo a work, as will be seen below. Ether in lieu of steam, or as an auxiliary to coal—an intention of M. Tremblay—has been in use in the French navy for some time past, and in successful use, it is said. The reason for employing ether in aid of steam is because its boiling point is very low, viz., 98 degrees; but it appears to have been forgotten in sending a vessel with ether to Brazil, that she would have to pass through a temperature much higher, even in the shade, than the boiling point of this most inflammable liquid; and that, therefore, it could not exist in the ordinary stowage tanks. The result of this want of foresight was, that the ether, floating about in a stage of vapour, caught fire, burned a fine ship, and destroyed much property. It was most providential that the accident occurred in harbour. At sea it would have been a truly awful occurrence.

**SECRETS OF VENTILATION.**—Let the air enter the house freely by a large aperture, like a common window, and capable of regulation in the same way. Let it enter a stove room, and be there completely warmed, and then let it pass freely through the whole house, and enter all the apartments either at the doors or by express channels. Take off the used air by the chimney and an open fire; or, for crowds, provide larger and express openings; there is no more to be done. Houses that we have seen ventilated in this simple, unpretending, unmysterious manner, are the best ventilated we have ever entered. It is too often the fate of the mysterious little pipes, funnels, tubes, and valves, by which ventilation is frequently symbolized, rather to indicate ventilation than to effect it.—*Illustrations of the Theory of Ventilation.*

**LAKE SUPERIOR RAILROAD.**—Notice is given in several of the Canadian papers, application will be made at the next session of Parliament for a charter authorizing a company to construct a railroad from the shores of Lake Superior to the valley of the Assiniboine, the intention being to continue it on to the shores of the Pacific. An exchange says: "It would not be a feather in the cap of the Yankees, if after they had originated and long discussed the project of a railway line to the Pacific, their Canadian neighbours stepped in and quietly consummated the important enterprise. But if the next Congress shall take prompt and vigorous measures preliminary to the construction of the road, and giving earnest of the intention on the part of our government to continue the work to its completion, we shall probably hear do more of the Canadian scheme."

**A DOMESTIC IMPROVEMENT.**—Putting down carpets with tacks has always been a trial and tribulation to housekeepers, which ought to have been obviated by some better invention before this. An improvement which will answer the purpose has been announced. It consists of a series of cast iron buttons, with the lower end formed in the shape of a cam. This is secured to the base-board of the room, and when the carpet is properly stretched, the cams are turned down upon it and retain it firmly in its place. This saves the carpet from the tear and wear of tacks, and the floor from the injury of nails being driven into it, beside making the putting down and removing of carpets but a few minutes' work.

**ANOTHER FASHIONABLE ABOMINATION.**—The London *Lancet* states that the use of the drug belladonna, as practised in Oriental harems, to give brilliancy to the eye, is now unblushingly advertised and provided for by the caterers of fashion. The effect of this powerful and deadly drug upon the eye, is to contract the iris and enlarge the pupil, intensifying its brilliancy, and rapidly destroying the organ. But for too many examples of suicidal vanity, which no dread of consequences can restrain, we might hope that this degrading self-torture would be shunned. Warning may at least be useful before the sin becomes a fashion.

**SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATED.**—We came up Vesey street the other afternoon, looking at the workmen laying down the rails for the Sixth and Eighth avenue cars—query as to Sixth—and wondering how they were to work on a single track; and still we wondered, for no one could tell, and then we looked up and over across Broadway, at the full length, very accurate, artistically painted portrait of the "Russian Giant," standing out from the front of Barnum's Museum. At first we had a mere suspicion that in point of size it might be slightly exaggerated, but then, again, when we reflected that Barnum had gone to Europe, and that there was no humbug now about the "old curiosity shop," we concluded to believe that it was exactly what it purported to be, a true portrait of the monster man then and there on exhibition. We did think of risking our precious self in an attempt to cross Broadway, and go over and pay a quarter to look at the aforesaid Russian Giant. But, either from fear to attempt such a perilous passage, or because we were a quarter short, or because we had business down Broadway on the side where we stood, we concluded to defer our visit to the tall gentleman until another day. Just as we had come to this sage conclusion, and were about to move on, a farmer-like looking individual touched us on the elbow to attract our attention, and asked our opinion. Whether he thought we had a wondrous wise look, or whether he took us for one skilled in paintings, from having observed our attention to this one, or whether he judged from our beard that we were a Turk, and of course knew what a Russian was, and particularly how big a Russian giant should be, we are still in doubt; but he put the question so earnest and direct that we were obliged to answer it with equal directness.

"Do you think," said he, "that that likeness is correct?"

"Undoubtedly," we replied, "except that it may be slightly exaggerated."

"Slightly exaggerated?" he repeated slowly to himself. That big word was slightly exaggerated beyond his comprehension, and, while he thought, we said: "Why?"

"Well, you see, I live down on Long Island, a good piece from here; I own a farm, I do, down there, and I have a neighbour who owns a farm, who is about the biggest man, I thought, on earth, and he has been a talking, right-down earnest lately about showing himself to make money; and I tell you what 'tis, colonel, it would be worth a quarter to see him; but, gad zooks, if that chap up there can fill that picture, my neighbor may as well go to bed and lay there, for he would be no show along the road that this Russian fellow travels, that is certain."

"Now, friend," we replied, "we can tell you what you can do—just go over and see the 'Russian giant,' and then you can tell how much bigger he is than your Long Island specimen, and whether he really is as big as he looks. And if he is, you may as well tell your neighbor to stick to his farm, and leave the show business to Barnum & Company."

"By George, old fellow, you are right, and I will do it. If I ask him, I should say he will pay me back the quarter, 'cause it is on his account altogether that I shall go to see this chap; for, according to my notion, Long Island is hard to beat anyhow."

We thought so, too, and went our way while he of Long Island went to see whether the Russian dominions could produce a bigger man than the dominions of this elongated strip of sea sand. We don't think we should have thought of the subject again, if we had not been accosted on our return to the same spot by a man struggling to get through the crush of carriages so as to speak to us before we were lost in the crowd.

"Hollo, 'squire! stop a minute. By George, I want to speak to you."

It was our new acquaintance from Long Island, just returning from his visit to the Russian giant.

"Well," said we, "have you seen him?" pointing at the same time to the portrait.

"Seen him! seen him! Yes, I have."

"You did not," we suggested, "find the picture much exaggerated?"

"Slightly, yes, slightly. I inquired the meaning of that word—I didn't quite understand it; but you were right—yes, slightly exaggerated. Well I've spent a quarter."

"And seen the Russian giant?"

"No, but I have seen the elephant. Look here, neighbor, you know I went to see this fellow solely on account of my neighbor, at your suggestion, as it was only a quarter."

"Which he will undoubtedly refund to you, if his heart is as big in proportion as his body."

"Do you think so? I don't; and don't believe you'll, when you hear me out. Well, you see, I paid my quarter and went up, and there stood the giant, his back to me, and I began to think, that my neighbor would have to knock under a little; but Lord, says I, this fellow ain't so big as that picture, by a long chalk. And so as I could tell my neighbor a pretty good story, and that he needn't be afraid of this Russian chap, perhaps he would pay the quarter back. Just then the fellow turned round, and I looked at him and he looked at me, and I suppose I looked sort of foolish, and at that the fellow broke out into a hearty laugh, and says he, 'Why, halloo, Smith, don't you know me? How's the folks down on the Island?' Whew! Russian giants! Why it was my old neighbor only a little stuffed and fixed up with a mustache, and—well, yes, "looking up at the picture," yes, it is slightly exaggerated."

"Then you didn't ask him to refund the quarter?"

"No, Sir; I paid it to see a man that I had seen a thousand times before, and I was perfectly satisfied. I have seen the elephant. Good bye; I am going down to Long Island, right straight."

**RAILWAYS IN THE HOLY LAND.**—Sir John McNeill passed through Paris on his return to London from Syria and Palestine, where Sir John has been for some time past engaged in laying out a harbour on the east coast of the Mediterranean, and the railway which is to extend from thence to the Persian Gulf. General Chesney remains at Constantinople, to get the details of the firm completed, the general principles of which had been agreed upon by the Turkish Government before he and Sir John left Constantinople for the East. The other railway on which Sir John has been employed is one of great interest to all the civilized world—namely, that from the ancient seaport of Joppa, now Jaffa, to Jerusalem, and from thence to Damascus.

**PROTESTANT SCHOOL.**—The Bavarian Government has permitted the establishment of a Protestant school at Kissingen, which has been endowed by Madame Jenny Lind Goldschmidt and other visitors to that fashionable watering-place the past summer, to the extent of 5,000 florins.

**ARCTIC EXPEDITION.**—An Expedition will be prepared forthwith to proceed in search of further traces of Sir John Franklin's party, via Behring's Straits. The command will, it is said, be conferred upon Captain George H. Richards.

**THE LAKES.**—The disasters on the Lakes this season far exceed those of former years in number and fatality. The *Chicago Tribune* gives an imperfect list of the totally lost vessels, making an aggregate of six steamers, nine propellers, two tugs, five brigs, and twenty-eight schooners. At a low calculation, 200 lives have been lost. Several of the vessels have disappeared and never been heard from.

**TENNYSON.**—The Poet Laureate has a new volume nearly ready for the press. It will, we are informed, consist of two poems, both of considerable length, and in blank verse, and the subject of each drawn from the storehouse of Arthurian romance.—*Literary Gazette.*

**TRAVEL ABOLISHED.**—Referring to the tremendous speed of railway trains, Thackeray says, not without reason, that "we do not travel now-a-days; we arrive at places;" and Ruskin, in his late volume, says, "railway travelling is not travelling at all; it is merely being sent to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel."