

There appears to be nothing new under the sun. They tell us now that the rain-making machine was patented years ago in the United States. Perhaps the man who first invented it preferred to keep it quiet, waiting for the public to be educated up to a pitch when it could safely stand the innovation.

Such a demand for museum freaks possessed of caudal appendages has recently been apparent in the freak market that an ingenious fellow, Dr. Ege, of Reading, has undertaken to supply the member that Darwin says the human race used to possess. For the sum of \$50 the doctor will graft a tail on the man, woman or child who has an ambition to wag in public. Truly this is an age of vast improvements!

The discussion among Medical men as to the value of music as an agent for convalescence, to which we alluded last week, has resulted in the establishment in London of a guild of St. Cecelia, with the aim of training musicians to soothe a patient's nerves with music, under the directions of the physicians. Every member must possess a sweet, gentle voice and delicate execution. Miss Florence Nightingale is among the subscribers.

We are accustomed to think of the Czar in a manner not complimentary to his qualities of heart, but to judge by what he said to the Prince of Naples, while conversing with him recently, he has no small opinion of his own virtues as a ruler. "Although," he said, "I no longer belong to the younger Sovereigns of Europe, nevertheless I count myself among those Princes of the younger generation who are ready to study the needs of the people and to regulate their conduct accordingly."

The recent advances made in the study of the moon through the great telescope at the Lick Observatory seem likely to upset all previous theories with regard to our satellite. For a long time we have been accustomed to hear that the moon has no atmosphere; it was commonly called a "dead world," but if the luminous white spot seen by Professor Holden is snow, we must perforce prepare ourselves to believe something new. Perhaps it is inhabited, but this we cannot tell. Professor Holden may yet photograph the moon with a new shadow on it, which will signify much.

The present Prime Minister of England is quite a distinguished Savant as well as a Statesman. In a recent lecture before the Chemical Society of London, he said:—"Astronomy is, in a great measure, the science of things as they probably are, geology is the science of things as they probably were, and chemistry is the science of things as they are at present." The omission of "probably" in the last named appears to place it above the others by adding the element of certainty. The *Electrical Engineer* adds to Lord Salisbury's terse statement: "Electricity is the science of things as they probably will be."

The folk-lore of Indian tribes is very difficult to acquire a knowledge of, but the phonograph is making the task comparatively easy now. The instrument is absolutely accurate, and legends, stories, ancient songs, counting out rhymes, conversations and music, can be faultlessly recorded on the wax cylinders. Dr. J. Walker Fewkes recently related to the American Folk-Lore Society experiments which he had made with the Passamaquoddy Indians with much success. The results show that the phonograph will prove an invaluable assistant in the study of Indian folk-lore, both in preserving the tales and in the study and composition of the music and language.

Goldthwaite's Geographical Magazine for September contains a number of articles bearing on Canada and things of Canadian interest. Among them we find some remarks on the Hudson Bay Company, which, it says "many years ago, when in the height of its prosperity, saw before it the fate which now bids fair to overtake it. It was a great money-making corporation, and the continuance of its prosperity seemed to depend upon keeping civilization out of the regions from which it drew its wealth. Its explorers did a great deal to trace rivers, map mountain ranges, and add to geographical knowledge generally, but much of the information they accumulated was for long years kept secret in the records of the Company, because the great concern did not want the world to become acquainted with the vast wildernesses of North America, fearing that if they published to geographers the information they had gathered, other white enterprisers would push in, and with the increase of population would come the diminution of fur-bearing animals, and the loss of much of their business. That is actually occurring, and the Hudson Bay Company, great as it has been, can not stop the march of destiny. Many thousands of square miles which used to be their hunting grounds are now the homes of farmers. Even in the far north, where few colonists are yet found, the fur bearing animals have been largely reduced in numbers. The result is that for some years past the Company has not been making much money. It has changed its business to a considerable extent. It bought a lot of land in the Canadian North-West to hold for speculative purposes, but there is so much Government land to be had for nothing that their speculation has as yet proved anything but profitable. In quite a number of large towns, like Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria, the Company is engaged in a general merchandize business, out of which they make some money. The affairs of the Company, however, are not very brisk, and the great concern which has taken so many millions of dollars worth of furs from the north of America, is likely some day to wind up its affairs and pass into history."

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The telephone is one of the "modern conveniences" which we would find it very inconvenient to do without after having known its usefulness, and it is with pleasure we read in an English paper that it is about to have a new application, that of foretelling storms. A new discovery has been made as to one of the properties of this means of transmitting sound. By placing two iron bars at seven or eight metres distance from each other, and then putting them in communication on one side by a copper wire covered with rubber, and on the other side with a telephone, a storm can, it is said, be predicted at least twelve hours ahead through a dead sound heard in the receiver. According as the storm advances the sound resembles the beating of hailstones against the windows. Every flash of lightning, and of course every clap of thunder that accompanies the storm, produces a shock similar to that of a storm cast between the diaphragm and the instrument. This, if it can be depended upon, would prove of great use in foretelling the course of a storm, and give time for preparation for it.

We are sometimes inclined to find fault with English orthography, but after reading what Miss Minnie Muriel Dowie, the young lady who travelled alone in the Karpathian Mountains, has to say of the Polish language, we ought to be reduced to a state of blissful content with our mother-tongue. Miss Dowie says:—"The ingenuity with which they (the Poles) can combine their consonants, the Kaleidoscopic feats they can perform with an *sz*, a *cz*, a *dx*, and an *rz*, these alone force a certain breathless admiration from the aspiring student and even the disinterested spectator; but when you watch their careless and light-hearted feminization of a verb, your eye is dazzled and seems to lose its power of focus. In any case, the favorite build of a Polish word is four-masted and three-decked, with quite a heap of rigging; or perhaps, it will be clearer if I say that it is panoramic. Positively, you cannot see the whole of it at once; you have to get pretty far away, and take a bird's-eye-view, and even then I have found several words over which I had a difficulty in grasping the beginning, the middle and its surroundings, and the end, all in the same glance. When reading, you have to draw a deep singing breath and swallow it, keep yourself cool, well in hand, and move the eye steadily along the word." No one will be likely, we fancy, to undertake the study of Polish without grave necessity.

The rain-maker is a machine that savors of the diabolical to many people. Interference with the laws of nature is a thing that cannot be countenanced by a large class, and there is no doubt much to be said against any such attempt. At the same time we are of the opinion that when really good results can be accomplished by means of any invention there is no reason why it should not be used in the proper times and places. As for interference with natural laws, are we not transgressing, if it be a transgression, all the time? Electricity harnessed to the telephone, the telegraph and other conveniences is not natural, but it does not appear to be sinful. The only trouble with the rain machine is that it might be used on occasions when it would prove inconvenient to a large number of people. A good many experiments have been made with General Dyregorth's rain-making balloon at Midland, Texas, and at El Pasco, but they do not appear to have been decisive. Several kites, with dynamite attached to their tails, were sent up immediately after the balloons, and the dynamite was exploded by electricity, creating a great shock. Rain certainly fell, and copiously, but the weather had been cloudy, and the doubt is whether God and Nature, or man and dynamite, were responsible for the showers. It would be convenient to have a reliable rain-making machine under the control of the State for use in time of drought, but we would rather be excused having the dampener placed in the hands of every man who pleased to operate it. Now, if some one would invent an engine to act in the reverse manner to the rain-maker so that we could have the weather thoroughly under control, it would make life much simpler. To rain or not to rain, would be a question for the proper authorities to settle, and we poor mortals could govern ourselves accordingly.

If it is true, as has been stated in several papers, that Mrs. Aikins, (formerly Miss May McLellan, daughter of the late Lieut.-Governor of Nova Scotia, whose husband is seeking a divorce from her on the most serious grounds,) was persuaded by her parents to marry Mr. Aikins against her will, when she loved another man, a young civil service clerk with a salary of \$700 a year, and she warned her parents at the time that they would regret forcing her to marry Aikins,—if this is true, we say, it contains a lesson for match-making fathers and mothers, that should be laid to heart. It is well enough for parents to look after the prospects of their children in a matrimonial way to a certain extent, and it is also very satisfactory when the children are accommodating enough to love those whom their parents would have them marry, but there is no questioning the fact that much married misery is caused by undue interference with the inclinations of young people. Harm enough can be accomplished by preventing the marriage of people, the only objection to whose union is mercenary, but it is nothing compared with what may be the result of coercing a union distasteful to either of the contracting parties. The game of hearts is one not to be recklessly interfered with, and the sooner parents realize this fact the better it will be for all concerned. The books that have been written, with the misery caused by mercenary marriages as the theme, can scarcely be numbered, and yet we have the same old thing over and over again, causing domestic tragedies and scandals that have to be threshed out in the divorce courts.

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