

PROPHETIC ALMANACS.

As our faith in Moore is only equalled by our faith in Zadkiel, we shall do no injustice, we hope, to either by consulting the rival oracles indiscriminately. It is comforting to find the new year described as one of prosperity. In spite of a prevalence of strong southerly winds, mankind in general will be sociable and will delight in "husbandry and manuring the earth." Venus in Taurus will keep things "tolerably peaceful" in Ireland during April; Fenianism is to be scotched for a while, but we await with curiosity the "new arguments" on Home Rule now maturing, we presume, in the fertile imagination of Mr. Butt. One of our largest colonies is to "clamor for a separate existence, and its pretensions will be seconded by a foreign Power of great magnitude." But we read with relief that the time for England's doom is not yet; indeed, our maritime supremacy which we owe to the influence of Arion, is to continue, despite Mr. Reed's gloomy forebodings, until the "powers of heaven are shaken." An English nobleman of ancient family is to go over to Rome, and his example will be followed by a distinguished member of the Anglican ministry; but we look in vain for the usual announcement that "an eminent divine is likely to be caught in the snares of the little wretched boy." There is to be a new substitute, it would seem, for steam-engines. The difficulty of obtaining coal will lead to the "successful adoption of a principle of locomotion by which the consumption of fuel will be reduced to a minimum." The complete solution of the problem of aerial navigation is to be reserved for our children's children, who are to roam to air in vehicles as manageable as a toy-cart; but we are authorized by Zadkiel to state that in 1873 men will "prepare to begin" to navigate the air when Mercury is exalted above the Moon. A "great and perplexing law-suit"—may we venture to understand by this the Tichenor trial?—will be as far from solution as ever when the year has expired. The death of one of the principal parties is to lead to "endless complications," which will disappoint the public, but gratify the "be-wigged gentlemen." Furthermore, another case still more exciting and full of startling revelations is promised us for 1871. Beyond, however, announcing some "salutary laws relating to land," the stars very properly decline to divulge the secrets of the Cabinet.

Looking abroad, we find mankind surveyed from China to Peru. We are so accustomed to hear of things from America that "as with the whole world," that the announcement of more wonders does not occasion much surprise; it conforms as strictly to precedent as sinister prognostics with respect to the sick man. The burning of Chicago does not appear to have been predicted, but then of course even an astrologer cannot be responsible for the vagaries of an American cow. As regards the *Alabama* questions, however, the physician is evidently wandering with his planets. "The Arbitration," he says, "will give their verdict upon the question of the indirect claims, but at the last moment a legal flaw will be discovered in the constitution of the Court and the whole question will be reopened." It adds greatly to the merits of astrology that it should be able not only to create the future but to undo the past. In France the present Government is to continue "in the ascendant"; there are to be some military riots in May, and in July the nation is to be punished in some manner for its conduct towards the "half-naked men of Africa"; but a judicious retrogression of Jupiter in Leo will stave off serious evils. Wars and rumors of wars are to occur in Asia and South Africa, but Russia is to take to painting and literature instead of extending her territory; and, what with exhibitions and arbitration, we are to arrive at a "cosmopolitan feeling of brotherly affection for all mankind" in December. A disagreeable discovery, however, appears to be in store for us. It will be found that England and France, with several other countries of Europe, have been duped by an impostor. "By the concoction of a bold and plausible solution of a question which for years has agitated the minds of all civilized men, an arrant knave had succeeded in disarming their suspicions, and had been publicly received and fêted in almost every town of importance, and looked upon as one of the noblest of his race." When the bubble bursts about July, the clung of a deluded people is only to be qualified by a "deeper and more solemn sadness." There is a tone of self-distrust in the remark that "it may not be the time yet for the coming millennium," which represents perhaps Dr. Cumming's latest opinions on the subject, but we might have expected more assurance from an astrologer. Nor is it quite satisfactory to find such utterances as "great uncertainty appears in mundane affairs"—"there will be many close consultations; I hope they may be for the best"—"some great projects are talked about, but I rather think they will come to nothing." Even ordinary mortals can "hope" and "rather think," but we look for better things from a reader of the stars. Such generalities expose the science to unworthy imitations. Indeed, we imagine that a very tolerable system of prognostics might be constructed on the basis of a few simple principles—that there is nothing new under the sun, and that the progress of mankind in wisdom is not very perceptible on the general view of things. Thus we might venture to predict that several fires will happen in 1873, particularly in London; and several pockets will be picked with more or less success—or, as Moore

would say, some "private contrivances of a mischievous nature will go in agitation"; that several long debates will take place in Parliament, and that in the subsequent divisions the numbers will be about the same as if there had been no debate at all; that Mr. Whitley will discover a new Jesuit in disguise, and Mr. Ayton will not improve his manners; and that several thousand sermons will be preached, many of which have been preached before, and few of them remembered after. And it may be added, in the language of the oracle, that many people will "precipitate themselves into mischief by luxury and extravagant courses." That a probably a signal marriage will be concluded, and "one of the female sex will suffer from frost-bite, but whether deservedly or not let time determine." The horoscopes before us are too wonderful to be described in plain prose. Zadkiel contents himself with four words: "representing the operation of ploughing, a husbanding, apparently an anachronism for 1873—a number of Chinese fighting with Europeans, and an earthquake. Moore's pennyworth is richer in allegory. Among other objects we observe a young lady with an enormous chignon contemplating a lion and a cat. The prominence of this figure, it is explained, indicates the position which woman is destined to occupy in the immediate future; but her averted face and her attention to the cat give evidence that she will still retain her native "unobtrusiveness and domesticity."

Of course no prudent astrologer would give his reasons for predicting anything if there were the faintest chance of their being intelligible, but even star-puzzlers have apparently a method in their madness. Thus an opposition of Saturn and Mars seems to provoke a tendency to gossip, while the transit of the latter through Scorpio instantly produces bankruptcies in Liverpool. When Jupiter opposes Venus there is "trouble and vexation in store for one of the fair sex, by means of some person in orders," but the former, when saluted by the friendly beams of the sun, brings preferment to the "truly pious clergy."—*Saturday Review*.

UMBRELLAS.

Here is what *All the Year Round* says about umbrellas and their early use:

A large umbrella was usually kept hanging in the hall at good houses, to keep visitors dry as they passed to or from their carriages. Coffee-houses kept a provided in the same way for their frequenters, but men disdained to carry such a convenience through the streets. It was held off, indeed, to shirk a wetting. "Take that thing away," said Lord Cornwallis to the servant about to hold the house umbrella over him. "I am not sugar or salt, to melt in a shower." The Marquis would have enjoyed the scene at that Metz review, when an officer offering his umbrella to his unprotected Emperor, Joseph II., exclaimed, "I need not a shower, it hurts nothing of a man but his clothes." Whereupon ensued a closing movement all round.

There is certainly something unsoldierly about our subject, and it is hard to imagine the guards under fire and umbrellas at the same time. Such a thing, however, was seen once. During the action at the Mayor's House, near Bayonne, in 1813, the Grenadiers under Colonel Tynning, occupied an unfinished redoubt near the high road. Wellington, happening to ride that way, beheld the officers of the household regiment protecting themselves from the pelting rain with their umbrellas. This was too much for the great chief's equanimity, and he sent off Lord A. Hill instantly, with this message, "Lord Wellington does not approve of the use of umbrellas under fire, and cannot allow the gentlemen's sons to make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the army." He afterward gave the Colonel a good wigging himself, telling him, "The Guards may carry umbrellas when on duty at St. James, but in the field it is not only ridiculous but unmilitary."

Saint-Beuve saw nothing ridiculous in standing fire under an umbrella. When he appeared as a duellist for the first time and last in his life, the critic took his place, armed with an ancient flint-lock pistol and an umbrella. His adversary protested against the gingham, the seconds remonstrated, but in vain. Saint-Beuve declared he had no objection to being shot, but preferred to die a dry death, so the duel proceeded, until each combatant had fired four shots without effect. Saint-Beuve keeping his umbrella hoisted to the end. Wolfe, no feather-bed soldier, did not think there was any unmanliness in keeping one's coat dry. Writing home from France, in 1752, he expressed his surprise that the Parisian fashion of using umbrellas in sunshine, and something of the same kind in wet weather, had not been adopted in England.

WHOLESALE EXECUTIONS IN CHINA.

"One hundred bamboo cages are wanted!" Such was the form of an order issued a short time ago (says a Shanghai paper) from the office of the Chow Yang district magistrate near Swatow. The plain meaning was that about that number of men were to be beheaded, and the bamboo workers were required to furnish the requisite means of conveying the victims to the execution ground. The occasion of this beheading was the presence of General Pang, who by special imperial commission is meting out justice to delinquents in the district indicated of

20 and 30 years' standing, as well as to those of quite recent date. It so happened that only 80 of the cages were used, the remainder being kept in reserve, for the prisons are yet full. The victims, on arriving at the Acadama, were placed in long rows, the men in each row being some 10 feet apart, so as to furnish plenty of room for the agile executioner, after leaving one to get a good swing of his blade before coming to another. When all were arranged, and rays of sword or choppers were placed at suitable intervals along the line—for the executioner uses a fresh one for every half dozen men—the horrible work commenced, and the fellow went bounding and dancing down one row and up another, whacking off a human head at every fall of the bloody cleaver. The scene we have attempted dimly to shadow forth is more suggestive of the slaughter of hogs in those large American establishments where they make away with a thousand a day. But, for celerity, that one Chinaman can surpass any gallitiao that ever was made. During the past three years General Pang has beheaded some 3,000 at least, and the most of the work has been done by this one man—a short stout built fellow, with a hawk nose that well befits his calling—who attends Pang wherever he goes. His history, as told by the people of Swatow, is curious enough. One day, in old rebel times, Pang had a slice of rebels kneeling before him for execution. The executioner began, and was bungling in a horrible way. The hawk-nose fellow was down the line awaiting his turn. He was used to such scenes, and did not quail. He watched the bungler for a few turns, and then called in a loud voice to Pang to know if they were all to be hacked in that manner; and then asked to be released, and he would show them how to do it. Pang was struck with his audacity, and ordered his request to be complied with. He went at it and made short work of it, then throwing down the sword and resuming his kneeling posture, he called upon them to finish him. "No," said Pang, "that man is too useful, I want him myself," and so he was spared, and a bloody career has he since led. He prides himself on his horrid calling, and boasts that he never misses his aim, nor takes a second blow.

OLD BACHELORS.

What more miserable object can there be than an old bachelor? And who attracts so much disagreeable attention from those who behold him? People in general do not know whether to compassionate or condemn the poor fellow, and so they adopt a compromise and laugh at him. There can be no doubt about this fact—that the life of the old bachelor is a sorry one. If he is poor, he is snubbed by mankind in general; if he is rich, he is pampered and petted, but it is rendered evident, at the same time, that as a whole people are only making much of him in the hope that he will remember them in his will. He is considered, by numerous nephews and nieces, and a large circle of acquaintances, as a legitimate object for plunder; and never are such better pleased than when they have compelled him to disgorge some of his wealth. As a rule, he has to take up his residence with people who allow him to remain with them on sufferance only; and the general impression appears to be that he is a species of social reprobate, who ought to be made as miserable as possible. Many persons make a point of openly jeering at him when they do not desire to obtain anything from him, while others pet and coax him when there is anything to be gained thereby. But, whenever he is pampered, he must be painfully aware that it is not so much for himself as for that filthy lucre which he is reputed to possess, and this knowledge, if he be a man of any sentiment, must be peculiarly galling. Those who, in his younger days, really loved the old bachelor, die off, become scattered over the world, or create new ties for themselves. He creates few, if any, of these new ties. A man, by marriage, most frequently unites himself with a young and rising generation, and his children remain attached to him until he dies, and treasure his memory long after he has passed away. This is what, in the very nature of things, the old bachelor cannot do; if he wishes to secure the affection of a rising generation, he must ingratiate himself with the children of other men, and, at the best, has to content himself with a second-rate love, and this love, second-rate though it be, is difficult of attainment. He may buy the semblance of it, but no one can know better than he does when he has purchased the shadow for the substance. Besides, a long life of bachelorhood develops a number of objectionable characteristics which are calculated to induce people to place themselves in antagonism to him. He has for many years no one to care for but himself; no one's comfort or convenience to study but his own. This generates selfishness, which in time becomes chronic. Further, every service which is rendered him being paid for in some way or other, he deems himself privileged to snap and snarl if things are not exactly to his liking. This induces the belief, on his part, that his comfort is paramount to everybody else's, and should on all occasions receive the first and most careful consideration. Thus he loses his equanimity if people—even those who are not beholden to him in any way—display a disregard of his likes and dislikes. He grumbles, for instance, when they invade his territory and leave his door open; and grows still more bitterly when these around him make a noise. In short, he becomes seditious, irritable, and intensely selfish;

and yet, though this is the case, he is placed in such a helpless position that he must perforce allow himself to be plundered, and bullied, and played upon generally by most of those with whom he comes in close and familiar contact.

There is much that is distinctive about an old bachelor. An ancient individual himself he differs, in a marked degree, from other aged men. In the matter of dress, he is at once more particular, and more apparently negligent; though this apparent negligence may arise from the fact that he has nobody who will take any trouble whatever in reference to him. Generally, he wraps himself up in a manner which at once bespeaks the very great solicitude he entertains on his own behalf; and the thought of "catching a cold" is a bugbear which frequently haunts his mind, and tends to make his life miserable. Nervousness and querulousness are among his distinguishing characteristics; and a hatred of all "little noises" is another striking idiosyncrasy. Thus, though he may profess, and really feel a love for children, he likes them to be near him only when they are quiet, and is apt to speak testily to thoughtless youngsters who are indulging in riotous proceedings. Many a young life is rendered one of intense anxiety and caution by the close proximity of an old bachelor, and not a few exuberant bursts of innocent mirth are checked by his acrid interference. It is not surprising that, under these circumstances, the old bachelor is avoided to a greater or lesser extent and regarded in the light of an infection. Though indisposed to relinquish his privileges, it is aggravating to him to notice this is the case; and he is often grieved to find that he is almost incapable of securing the real love of anyone. He hates himself because of his foibles and crotchets, but it is too late in the day for him to reform, and so he continues to cherish them, and indulge in eccentricities of dress, manner, speech, and in many instances, thought.

Though there are many old bachelors, comparatively few of them die unmarried. When least expected, they contract matrimonial alliances, thereby disappointing numerous nephews, nieces, and protégés, who have been coarsely expecting that they would come in for their property. The marriage of an old bachelor is regarded by many of these people in the light of a personal injury; and the chances are that he alienates, or irreparably offends, two-thirds of his professed friends. It is argued that an aged man—already far advanced in the sere and yellow leaf—has no right to tie himself in such a manner, it being his imperative duty to remain single, and look after the interests of those who have sacrificed so much on his behalf. The chances are, that his marriage is one of convenience more than actual love, both on his part and that of his wife. She, perhaps, takes him because he is wealthy, and can provide her with a first-rate establishment; he, probably, marries her because he feels insupportably lonely, and wishes to have a home of his own, where, if he cannot do everything exactly as he likes, he is certain of meeting with a real welcome. He becomes tired, no doubt, of living with others, who, if expediency demand they should do so, will not hesitate about casting him aside. Whether such marriages, as a rule, turn out completely satisfactory, is doubtful. As already hinted, the old bachelor generally becomes unfitted for domestic life; and, though, perhaps, after a hard struggle, aided by his wife, he tones down some of his more glaring defects, it is questionable whether he ever altogether undoes the evil work of years. This, at any rate, is certain—if his union proves fruitful, he must continually be haunted by the consciousness that he cannot, in the ordinary course of events, hope to live to see his children grown-up and in a fair way of managing for themselves.—*Liberal Review*.

RECOINING GOLD AT THE MINT.

The United States Mint at Philadelphia is now engaged in melting twenty millions of \$1 gold pieces which are being recoined into pieces of larger denominations. The reason for this is that the government has experienced trouble in issuing them in large quantities. This induced the government to take them from the Sub-Treasury in New York, where they have been idle the past few years, and place the metal in a more desirable shape.

From 1819, when the first one dollar gold pieces were coined at the mint in that city, to 1867, when the coinage was stopped, there has been \$17,709,442 made in the Philadelphia Mint alone. It is presumed that the whole issue of \$1 gold pieces will amount to over thirty millions.

One million of gold dollars, when first issued by the Mint, will weigh 3,686 pounds avoirdupois, or a fraction over one ton (twenty cwt.) and four-fifths. In twenty millions of dollars we have nearly thirty-three tons. The loss by abrasion in one million dollars is \$1,403.87. In other words, \$20,000,000, used ten years, loses \$38,686.140. If the twenty million pieces to be melted were piled in perpendicular line, they would reach eleven and five-sixths miles. Were the pieces laid flat on a level plain, they would extend one hundred and fifty-eight miles.

Mr. Reid, the present keeper of the prints and drawings at the British Museum, is about to publish "A history of the Print Room of the British Museum," with some account of its contents and biographical notices of its successive keepers.