

IN the course of a recent speech, Sir G. A. Macfarren pointed out that the Puritans advanced the cause of music in England. So far, he said, from thwarting the musical character of the people they (*i. e.*, the Round-heads) caused a counteraction. It was in the time of the Commonwealth that native musical competitions had their rise, and that native melodies were first published. The first opera was given by the special license of Cromwell, and in this opera a lady singer appeared on the stage. This last assertion is curious, in the face of the decided antipathy of the Puritans to anything in the shape of a stage play. English defects in the musical way began, the Professor truly observed, with the accession of the House of Hanover and the introduction of Italian opera, which latter gave the nation the appearance of a sterility in composers. Nor have the present Royal Family, in his opinion, freed themselves from the preference for foreign artists. He, however, takes a hopeful view of the future of English music, in which everybody will probably agree with him.

SOME very painful statements, the *St. James's Gazette* states, were made in the House of Commons recently, respecting what are termed "non-intoxicating beverages." The subject was brought under notice by Mr. B. Fletcher, who somewhat imprudently asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his attention had been called to the fact that the Excise officers had interfered with and stopped the sale of "herb-beer," and if he would state why there had been any interference with the manufacture and sale of this non-intoxicating beverage. Sir W. Harcourt explained that some of these so-called "non-intoxicating beverages" are found, on being tested, to be considerably stronger than London porter. It has, he alleges, also been found, that temperance drinks are popular in proportion to the number of degrees of proof-spirit they contain. These frightful revelations will fall like a bombshell in temperance circles. Perhaps it will even be discovered that non-intoxicating drinks are a prolific source of crime. It is sad to think that many a total abstainer may be unconsciously on the road to delirium tremens, and many a home be drifting to misery and ruin by over-indulgence in ginger-beer.

OF the birth of the boy-king of Spain the *St. James's Gazette* says:—To be born a king, like the latest of European Sovereigns, is the rarest of all lots. No parallel fortune can be found in the history of united Spain; while in French history we must retrace nearly six centuries to come upon the reign of John I., posthumous son of Louis X., whom he succeeded on the 15th of November, 1316. The infant monarch died four days later, when his uncle Philip V. resumed the sceptre he had provisionally held during the five months which elapsed between the deaths of his brother and nephew. Neither English nor Scotch annals offer a similar incident; though the luckless Mary Stuart was all but born a queen, having just completed the first week of her existence on the day of her accession, the 14th of December, 1542. No younger Prince ever bore the title of King of England than Henry VI., who ascended the throne in the ninth month of his age, September 1, 1422. Lest these instances should seem of evil omen, it may be observed that a long minority has before now been the prelude to a long and glorious reign—witness Louis XIV., who inherited the crown in his fifth year. Peter the Great, too, was Czar at ten.

IN a single passage of a letter to the *Times*, Mr. Justice Stephens thus expresses the utter hollowness and folly of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule scheme:—Will they (Mr. Gladstone's measures), to use his words, "restore to Ireland the first conditions of civilized life—the free course of law, the liberty of every individual in the exercise of every legal right, the confidence of the people in the law, and their sympathy with the law?" Mr. Gladstone's words show that Ireland is at present deprived of "the first conditions of civilized life," and this no doubt is true. Who has taken them away? The National League. Who has interfered with the free course of law? The National League. Who has deprived individuals of the exercise of their legal rights? The National League. Who returned the eighty-six Nationalists to Parliament? The National League. How are the first conditions of civilization to be restored? By making the representatives of the National League the ruling power in an Irish Parliament. How is the confidence of the people in the law and their sympathy with the law to be restored or excited? By entrusting legislative power and the administration of justice to the very men who have taken from Ireland the first elements of civilization and of personal liberty.

HAS science, asks a correspondent of the *St. James's Gazette*, any explanation of the prevalence of yellow among the earlier wild-flowers of the year? In a scrap of woodland near my house I picked, the other day, a posy of nine wild-flowers, seven of which were yellow; and in New Jersey

the same tint would seem to be characteristic of April. Not that American names are to be translated by English equivalents, as every one who has been "on the other side" has discovered. Thus, I went out "snipe-shooting" in Utah, and found the birds were large, tame, crane-like waders. I asked for Yorkshire pudding in New York, but found it a custardy thing in a glass. In natural history this tendency to transfer the old-country names to transatlantic objects altogether unlike those which they represent in Europe is specially conspicuous. Thus, for instance, "sparrow," "robin," and "wren" do not mean the birds whose names they have borrowed, any more than "daisy," "buttercup," or "primrose" stand for the flowers that are so called in England. Here and there occur instances of this acclimatization of transplanted terms which are specially interesting. Thus in England the hornbeam is called the "wych-hazel." This has gone across as "witch-hazel," and the name is applied to a tree of a perfectly different family, which has been adopted by "water-witches" as their magic "twig" with which they profess to locate subterranean springs. As a matter of fact, any forked twig is as good as, and no better than, any other, as I demonstrated for myself when studying the water-witches' avocation in the States. From maple to sage-bush, every "twig" acted in the same way under the same conditions.

ANCIENT history, says the *St. James's Gazette*, it has been well said, was made by geography and modern geology. The indented coast-lines of the Mediterranean peninsulas were a condition of their supremacy in the ancient world, while the greatness of England and the United States is largely based upon their coalfields. Within the last few years another mineral agent has begun to play a great part in the world. All the last developments of Russian policy in Central Asia would have been impossible without the sudden growth of the petroleum industry at Baku. The oil-wells have converted the barren shores of the Caspian into perhaps the most prosperous portion of all the Czar's domains. They have changed Baku itself from an isolated outpost to a flourishing seat of trade. They have built the railway between that port and Tiflis; they have added to the importance of Batoum; they have created great fleets upon the Caspian and the Volga, and added to the receipts of all the central Russian lines that converge at Ozaryzin; lastly, they have brought the Transcaspian railway, the great factor in the Central Asian politics of the near future, within the range of practical politics. It is satisfactory to find that the supplies of petroleum are not confined to the western end of the Central Asian line. Discoveries have been made at what the Russians hope will soon be the south-eastern terminus. The oil-wells of Sibi already feed the locomotives of the Indus Valley road, and will probably soon supply the Pishkeen frontier trains. That adds much to the value of the prospective terminus of M. Lessar's system. Unluckily it also increases very appreciably that gentleman's difficulties in getting there.

THE "Lounger" of the *Washington Sunday Herald* thus describes one of the dynamite bombs that have lately become so famous on both sides of the Atlantic. It is now in the hands of a gentleman who had received it as a *curio* from a Pole, who became possessed of it by a curious and interesting train of circumstances, which, for want of space, are not given: If there ever was a machine, says the "Lounger" that could properly be called infernal, it is this. The contrivance I saw was one of the pattern known to the French police as the "Orsini bomb," so denominated because it was first used in the attempt to assassinate the late Emperor of France, Napoleon Third, nearly thirty years ago. It is somewhat larger than the egg of a goose, of very much the same shape. It unscrews at the smaller end, and was so cast that when it exploded it would break up into bits of iron nearly the size and shape of lumps of cut sugar, the pieces being like those of an ordinary muzzle-loading musket. Each of these tubes, filled with fulminate—the white explosive in the common percussion cap—and upon the tube was placed a cap (made to explode very easily) about the size and shape of a musket cap. The weight of the shell, in falling these caps, and as they were all over the shell it could not fall without dropping on some one of them. The interior of the shell would hold a piece of dynamite somewhat larger than an ordinary egg, enough to drive the inch square fragments of iron through a man at thirty or forty yards. The shell was beautifully smooth, and had evidently been made by an expert in iron work. Its end was so perfectly fitted that you could scarcely discover that it was not one piece. A notch in the small part showed that an ordinary screw-driver was used to put it together. It was in form and shape the simplicity of perfection in destructiveness.