

THE GLEANER.

A street car moved by condensed air pressure has been successfully tried in Paris.

A plan is being elaborated in Paris for the recovery of small commercial debts through the Post Office.

EXAMINATIONS are being made of the geological features of the bed of the English Channel for testing the feasibility of the tunnel.

THE English scientists now employ exclusively Webster's unabridged dictionary, as being the most correct authority of the English language.

Gov. CONNOR, of Maine recommends that juries be authorized to pass sentence upon criminals in capital cases, which, he says, has been successful in California.

A winter pair of boots has been invented lined with a material which takes out in, and, being heated and placed in the boot, retains the warmth for an incredibly long time.

Kentucky has a law that all money won in betting on elections shall be confiscated to the school fund, and the Grand Jury at Louisville are rolling up a fearful list of indictments.

MINNESOTA is to have a State inebriate asylum for which the liquor sellers will have to pay, as the Supreme Court has sustained the constitutionality of the law imposing a tax for this purpose.

THE German census so far shows an increase of population in almost every part of the Empire, with the exception of Metz, where there has been a falling off of 10,000 in the population since the annexation.

THE increase during the last five years of letters and postal cards in Canada amounts to sixty per cent., the increase in the number of post offices to twenty-five per cent., and of the post office revenue to forty-six per cent.

THE last descendant of the famous navigator Amerigo Vespucci, who gave his name to the New World, has just died near Florence. He bore the same name as the great sailor of the fifteenth century.

THEOLOGY is not a favorite study with the rising generation in Germany. At the University of Heidelberg only nine out of the entire number of 433 students have entered their names for the theological lectures.

MEAT has been sent from Buenos Ayres to France in a perfect state of preservation in a pickle composed of two parts of bi-borate of soda, two of boric acid, three of saltpetre, and one of muriate of soda to 100 parts water.

IN cycles of 21,000 years the earth has been through alternate periods of unusual heat and cold, either of which is said by the scientists to superinduce on its surface an entirely new and different set of animals. Fortunately we are not yet at the close of such a cycle.

MR. MENZIES, who has just published a valuable work on forest trees in England, says that lightning never strikes dead trees, but always selects the strongest, and those full of sap. It is well worth knowing that the ivy often acts as a lightning conductor.

DR. W. H. RUSSELL, the *Times* correspondent, and secretary to the Prince of Wales during his Indian trip, has sent a telegram to the Foreign Office requesting a further consignment of presents at once, as the stock which the Prince took with him is nearly exhausted.

AN absurd performance was the recent experiment of a ball on skates with rollers, at Brighton, England. The movements of the skaters proved to be utterly incompatible with the musical requirements at a dance. Here in Montreal, dancing on skates has been tried at the Victoria Riuk with admirable success.

MONSIGNOR DEBS, the Maronite Archbishop of Beyrouth, has presented to the new Montmartre Church of Paris a gigantic cedar, described as one of the trees of Lebanon contemporary with those of Solomon and Hiram, which was lately blown down. Twelve fine planks from it, being a sacred number, will soon reach Paris.

A new form of insanity has been discovered. It beats even kleptomania. It is called cheiro-graphic insanity, and was invented by a highly ingenious lawyer, who had to defend a client charged with forgery. The counsel pleaded that the prisoner was in the habit of spending his evenings in signing imaginary cheques and bills.

OUT of a total population of 35,000,000 in France there are stated to be 500,000 Protestants and 49,000 Jews, half of the latter inhabiting Paris. The number of Frenchmen who have formally declared that they do not belong to any religion is about 82,000, and 3,071 are classed as members of "divers sects."

F. W. CLAPP, of the Massachusetts Legislature, has refused a railroad pass. "I believe," he says, "that no member of the Legislature can receive favor of this kind consistently with his duty to his constituents and the respect which he owes to himself." Four other members have also returned passes, but there are 274 to hear from.

MR. RUSKIN has obtained a site near Sheffield and also subscriptions to the amount of £8,000, in support of his scheme of an Arcadian village, to be elevated into the ideal of cultivated taste for the beautiful. He intends to build a number of cottages on the purest aesthetic principles, to found a museum, and, in short, to carry out his long-cherished plan on the best footing so far as funds will allow.

THE largest revolving gun that has probably ever been manufactured is now at the royal gun

factories in the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, England. It is a revolver with five chambers, firing successively through an open-mouth barrel, and moving about on a kind of truck. It weighs 35 cwt., and appears to be very ingeniously contrived. It will shortly be forwarded to Shoeburyness, to undergo a series of trials in competition with various charges of gun cotton.

A couple of weeks ago, Judge Torrance, of Montreal, was married in Louisville to Mrs. Laura Pugh, a native of Frankfort, Ky., a lady who is justly celebrated for wit and many accomplishments. The marriage was the result of a nineteen years' courtship, during which the lover had small hope of success. He renewed his suit annually, and last summer his constancy was rewarded by the promise of the fair lady to become his wife. Mrs. Torrance's first husband was the brother of Senator Pugh, of Ohio.

LIEUT. CAMERON the *Academy* says, will probably arrive in England in the middle of January. His splendid exploit places him, without dispute, in the very first rank of American travellers. He left Ujiji almost destitute, suffering from disease, and utter loneliness. Against him were the stupendous difficulties of the task; on his side were indomitable pluck, devotion to duty, and that gentle courage which had already earned for him the respect and love of the natives. There will be no stories of bloodshed in the narrative of this gallant naval officer. A glance at a map of Africa will at once show the magnitude of Cameron's achievement, and the importance of his discoveries. Excepting Livingstone and Silva Porto, he is the only European who ever crossed the continent of Africa within the tropics.

A GREAT OVERTURE.

What an overture it is, that of Mozart's "Nozze di Figaro!" how varied, how rich, how expressive, and how melodious! Every time one hears it, familiar as it is, it suggests new ideas. How shall it be described in detail? First of all, the strings start off gaily by themselves—all is smooth and in unison, as it ought to be in the house of Count Almaviva. Almost at once the oboes join, and the flutes immediately answer them. The strings repeat the original theme; but the oboes and flutes have something to say. Although everything seems so smooth and harmonious, you see there are other people besides his lordship in the great house with little plans and wills of their own, although they do not make themselves prominent. Listen how the instruments chase each other over the gamut, and occasionally slip round an unexpected turning—is not Cherubino always at his tricks? Barberina, too, is a wily little maiden; and the Count can turn adroitly round out of the way, to avoid discovery of an awkward incident, as seems to be suggested by the way in which the 'cello runs up the scale when you expect it to keep on its even course. The second violin and viola (I am now at the fifty-eighth bar) begin a placid, rocking movement, calculated to lull anybody into a false security—the Count lays his sly little plot with reference to Susanna very cleverly, and nothing appears on the surface; but Figaro is slier still. He catches a hint, some trifle out of the ordinary course (the lower G sharp suddenly replacing the A which has thrice been sounded), and he is down on it all like lightning—notice how the first violin, which has been meditating in silence for a while, pounces on that E, reflectively hovers a moment between it and the D sharp, and then gaily runs up to the A—Figaro comprehends it all, and has hit on a plan to avert the threatening danger. In the eighty-fourth bar the 'cello, tired of simply carrying out the whims of the violins and flutes and oboes, begins to suggest a little notion of his own, and submits it to his companions. He attracts little attention at first; but he repeats it, and then the violins, ten bars later, try it by themselves, and rather like it, the base instruments coming in with a couple of approving chords. The 'cello, as I imagine, is the Count with another of his base designs, only Figaro's quick ear catches it, and this is the repetition of the phrase by the violins—grasps it with the utmost clearness. After this, about the hundredth and few following bars, there is some slight discord in the palace. Figaro shows that he knows more than his master likes him to know; and the Countess has her own griefs; but all this soon disappears from the surface, and everything goes on merrily. About the hundred and twentieth bar, again the second violins and viola begin their attempt to beguile the watchfulness of Figaro with regard to his wife Susanna, and, as before, his keen wit aids him—here the first violin reflects with rapid brains between the A and G sharp, and away up to the D it starts—as before, Figaro is wide awake. So it proceeds, and does not end until Cherubino has had one or two narrow escapes. Away down the scale run the strings, and after them in hot pursuit is the wind; a sharp slip aside, and the wind has got down to the bottom of the scale to find nothing except the 'cello and a couple of bassoons, and when it gets up to the place from whence the strings started, they are well on their way to the bottom of the scale again, until at last all unite with one consent into a harmonious finale. Figaro and Susanna are married, the Count and Countess reconciled, Cherubino leaves the girls alone, and, smitten with military enthusiasm, sings "Alla gloria militar!" with the best of the regiment. Such, at least, is part of the story which the overture conveys to me.

BRELOQUES POUR DAMES.

A lively lady remarked:—"I notice that these woman's right's people are invariably men's lefts."

THE most bashful girl we ever knew was one who blushed when asked if she had not been courting sleep.

A British barmaid married one of her customers and cured him of his passion for drink. He died an M. P. and left her \$400,000.

YOUNG ladies who wear clanking chains around their waists, and large hoop bracelets, as far as the elbow on their arm, are called "fashionable convicts."

"Go out, young man's; she's not here?" said a Pennsylvania preacher last Sunday, in the midst of his sermon, to a youth whom he saw hesitating in the doorway.

As old Mr. — heaved the last scuttle of four tons of coal into his cellar, he was heard to remark: "If they had been boys instead of girls, it wouldn't have been thus. One ton would last all Winter."

A LADY in Halifax having occasion to enter a milliner's shop, had her attention attracted by a beautiful and expensive French bonnet, and inquired the price; she was told it was sold. "Oh, I had no idea of buying such a bonnet," said the lady; upon which the milliner said, "it is a joint-stock bonnet—that is, it belongs to three factory girls, who wear it by turn on Sunday."

ONE of the curates belonging to a large and poor parish entered the home of an aged couple, and found the "gudewife" in a very exhausted condition from pain and disease. In the hope of alleviating her suffering, he quickly procured some brandy, saying that it was purchased from the offertory alms. A day or two afterwards he went again to see the old people, when the poor woman made the following statement—"That brandy, sir, did me a power o' good, and a kind gentleman sent me some money, so my old man went ever so far to find the 'Offertory Arms,' to get me some more. He couldn't find out where it was, but he found the 'Bedford Arms,' and the brandy is just as good."

ODD FISH.

We have received from W. F. WHITCHER, Esq., of the Marine and Fisheries Department, at Ottawa, the following memorandum on the "Wonderful Fish" exhibited at Sarnia, and described in our illustrations last week:—

"The queer fish sketched in a recent number of the *Canadian Illustrated News*, is a remarkable specimen of the order *sturioides*, known to naturalists as the SPOONBILL STURGEON, (*polyodon spatula*), variously called the 'DUCKBILL, PADDLE FISH, and SHOVEL FISH. There is a different member of the *sturioides* group, named the SHOVEL FISH, (*scapiporinus cataphractes*), belonging to the sub-genus *sturioides*, with reference to which this similarity in nomenclature is apt to lead to confusion. It differs radically from all others of the order in having a smooth skin; an enormous leaf-like expansion of snout; a membranous gill flap extending its points nearly mid-way between the pectorals and ventrals; and, lastly, by a shark-like mouth, fringed with minute teeth. In general appearance it bears very little resemblance to the sturgeon. The flattened snout of the SAW FISH, but for its tooth-like projections, might entitle it, on sight, to claim relationship with *polyodon* more readily than its bony-plated kinsfolk. It is certainly a rarity in Canadian waters. Individuals have been taken in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. This is probably the species seen by Father Hennepin in Lake Pepin, in 1680, and which he says he at first mistook for 'the devil.' The Sarnia monster is most likely a Queen Dowager of the Royal Family of Sturgeons. Maybe she approached the shore to interview the 'Premier,' who has doubtless seen some queerer fish in the sea of politics, and some not so easily classified."

"The description given by your artist is in substance the same as that obligingly sent to me by Mr. David McMaster, the local Fishery Overseer; and the drawings now published resemble those made by Mr. H. T. Bell to accompany the report. The Minister authorized me to negotiate for the purchase of the specimen, but the ignorance and greed of the captors defeated our wishes. They demanded \$1,000."

YANKEE DOODLE.

After the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Great Britain and the United States had nearly concluded their pacific labors at Ghent, the burghers of that quaint old Dutch city determined to give an entertainment in their honor, and desired to have the national airs of the two treaty-making powers performed as a part of the programme. So the musical director was directed to call upon the American Ministers and obtain the music of the national air of the United States. A consultation ensued, at which Bayard and Gallatin favored "Hail Columbia!" while Clay, Russell and Adams were decidedly in favor of "Yankee Doodle." The musical director asked if any of the gentlemen had the music, and receiving a negative reply, suggested that perhaps one of them could sing or whistle the air. "I can't," said Mr. Clay, "I never whistled or sung a tune in my life—perhaps Mr. Bayard can." "Neither can I," replied Mr.

Bayard, "perhaps Mr. Russell can?" Mr. Russell, Mr. Gallatin and Mr. Adams in turn confessed their lack of musical ability. "I have it," exclaimed Mr. Clay, and ringing the bell he summoned his colored body servant. "John," said Mr. Clay, "whistle 'Yankee Doodle' for this gentleman." John did so, the chief musician noted down the air, and at the entertainment the Ghent Burghers' Band played the national air of the United States, with variations."

SLANG PHRASES.

At regular intervals there comes to the surface some peculiar slang expression which the American people seize upon and hold on to until they wear it threadbare. It may be said, too, that Americans are prone to the use of slang. For a long while the saying, "That's so, Johnny Roach!" had free sway, and "Bully for you!" was equally a favorite. "You bet!" had its origin in the mines of the Rocky Mountains, while "If you don't believe I'm a butcher just smell of my boots!" emanated from the old district of Spring Garden, and was the pet of the members of the Fairmount Engine Company. "I'll bet my pile!" "I can't see it!" "Too thin!" and "How's that for high?" have "gone to take a rest" with "everything lovely" and the "bully boy with a glass eye." The street Arab no longer asks, "Do you see anything green in my eye?" but with a degree of nonchalance such as can only be obtained through the nomadic life he leads, will hurl at you, "Oh, take a bath for fresh air!" "Shoot it!" was an importation and applied to any odd style of hat, but the expression never took firm root in the East. Occasionally a bore is saluted with "Oh, hush!" or "Go hire a hall!" And the latest for "Let's go see a man" is "Let's go have a tooth pulled." The most popular slang expression of the day, however, is, "Pull down your vest." After doing good service in the Western country, it has at length reached the Eastern cities, and is to-day as freely used as ever were any of the slang phrases that preceded it.

HEARTH AND HOME.

A TRUE LADY.—A woman's worth is to be estimated by the real goodness of her heart, the greatness of her soul, and the purity and sweetness of her character; and a woman with kindly disposition and well-balanced mind and temper is lovely and attractive, be her face ever so plain and her figure ever so homely.

A SISTER'S LOVE.—Who can tell the thoughts that cluster around the word sister? How ready she is to forgive the errors, to excuse the foibles of a brother. She never deserts him. In adversity she clings closely to him and in trial she cheers him. And when the bitter voice of reproach is poured in his ears she is ever ready to hush its harsh tones, and turn his attention away from its painful notes.

OCCUPATION.—How many persons there are in this world who entirely ignore the golden search for genial occupation! They are almost constantly striving after something which is entirely different from what they are capable of enjoying. We are not opposed to enterprise, but it is the habit of constantly changing from one thing to another against which we protest. There are thousands of men, and women too, who are to-day fast approaching the grave, and who are striving and toiling to keep soul and body together until the last hour, because it has been their habit all through life to be discontented. In their time they have tried perhaps a hundred different things, and all with little or no success; while, if they had chosen one pursuit, and devoted their time and attention exclusively to it, they would to-day, in all probability be spending their declining years in ease, surrounded with all the wants and comforts of life; for there is scarcely a single pursuit that, if followed with some purpose, will not yield a golden future.

A MOTHER'S HOME.—The most perfect home I ever saw was in a little house into the sweet incense of whose fires went no costly things. Six hundred dollars served for a year's living of father, mother, and three children. But the mother was a creator of home, and her relations with her children were the most beautiful I have ever seen. Even a dull and commonplace man was lifted up and enabled to do work for souls by the atmosphere which this woman created. Every inmate of her house involuntarily looked into her face for the keynote of the day, and it always rang clear. From the rosebud or the clover leaf which, in spite of her house work, she always found time to put by our plates at breakfast, down to the essay or story she had on hand to be read or discussed in the evening, there was no intermission of her influence. She always has been, and always will be, my ideal of a mother, a wife. If to her quick brain, loving heart, and exquisite tact had been added the appliances of wealth and the enlargement of wider culture, hers would have been absolutely the ideal home. As it was, it is the best I have ever seen. It has been more than twenty years since I crossed its threshold. I do not know whether she is living or not. But as I see house after house in which fathers, mothers, and children are dragging out their lives in a hap-hazard alternation of listless routine and unpleasant collision, I always think with a sigh of that little cottage by the sea-shore, and the woman who was the "light thereof," and I find in the face of many women and children, as plainly written and as sad to see as in the newspaper columns of "Personals"—"Wanted—A Home."