

Odds and Ends.

THE Bébé Jumeau doll with its movable and unbreakable limbs is made in thousands in the village of Montreuil near Paris, where the majority of the villagers of both sexes are employed in the manufacture. The factory was founded in 1843 by the father of the present proprietor, when the dolls were made of sheep-skin stuffed with sawdust, and were given china heads. A few years later they were made of turned wood, and despite the suggestions of his two sons, Jumeau père refused to make any others, content to make a profitable business of the then clumsy productions. It is to the second son, M. Emile Jumeau, who gave up his career as an architect to follow that of a doll-maker, when his father and elder brother died, that latter day children owe the Bébé Jumeau which he brought out in 1878. Not only do the Jumeau dolls serve as a delight to the nursery, but they are used by Parisian dressmakers to send to all countries dressed in the latest fashion, each doll being supplied with a complete wardrobe for every possible occasion, in the making of which as much skill and delicate workmanship has been lavished as upon the dresses they represent.

EVERY year in China a national festival is held in honour of the Empress Si Lung Chee, who is worshipped as the goddess of the silkworm. She was the first person in the world to raise silk-worms for the purpose of taking the silk from the cocoon, and upon her festival day the reigning Empress and her attendants repair to the temples that have been erected in her honour and lay oblations of flowers and money upon her altars. More people wear silk in China than in any other country, as in its plain raw state it is as cheap as cotton. Layers of wadding placed between the lining and the outside of silk garments make them warm enough for winter wear, and as fashion never changes in the Flowery Land, new clothes are never bought until the old ones are worn out. The tailors are naturally not very prosperous, but as they are always fat from lack of exercise, they are regarded by the Chinese as a high type of humanity, fatness being the desired condition of all Chinamen. Their workrooms are generally open on all sides, as many as ten men squatting round a low table in the centre, covered with matting, sewing and cutting busily all day long, for an average wage of about one pound a week.

THE Duchess of Orleans is a clever musician, and has composed several pretty pieces. Some time before her marriage she was staying with her family at one of their country châteaux, and one day a band of strolling musicians arrived, and asked for permission to play in the courtyard. The permission was granted, and the Duchess's father, the Archduke Joseph of Austria, went down to talk to them. The bandmaster told him that they were very badly off, as they had to pay such exorbitant royalties upon the songs and pieces they played. "Why don't you write something to help these poor people?" the Archduke said to his daughter. And sitting down she immediately composed "Après la pluie, le soleil"—sending it to the bandmaster with all rights and powers. Some little time afterwards she received a letter from the musicians saying that the piece had met with tremendous success, and was bringing them in a great deal of money.

RAILWAY engines like human beings have ailments, some of which baffle all the efforts of those who have charge of them. Two good locomotives may be made upon exactly the same plans and may each cost the usual price £2,200, and yet one will be a good one, and the other always out of order. A first-class railway engine of 300 horse-power is expected to travel 200,000 miles during its existence, that is to say, 13,000 miles every year for fifteen years, but over and over again engines are found that are so strong and so well-made that they go on for many years after their allotted decade and a half has been passed.

A BELGIAN naturalist tells an extraordinary story of the monkeys of Java. The crabs in that island, he says, live in holes on the edge of the sea, and the monkeys, when driven by stress of hunger, kill and eat them in the following manner. Creeping close to one of these holes the monkey lets his tail fall into it. The crab naturally at once seizes hold of the tail in his claws, and the monkey, sometimes screaming with pain, pulls his caudal appendage quickly away and with it the crab holding tightly to its end. Then, twisting it round and round in its paws, it dashes the crab violently against the rocks until its shell is broken and it obtains the reward of a considerable amount of suffering by eating the flesh. The writer points out that the monkeys only eat the crabs when they are unable to get other food.

THERE is a charming legend with regard to the origin of lace-making in Venice. A Venetian fisherman was, some centuries ago, engaged to a pretty and industrious girl who gave him a finely-woven fishing-net, made with her own hands, and the very first time he threw the net into the sea he drew to land a beautiful piece of petrified seaweed. Soon afterwards war broke out, and all the young fishermen of Venice had to go with the fleet and fight in the East, the girl's lover amongst them. Every day after her betrothed had gone the young weaver sat at her work, the petrified piece of seaweed close beside her, and as she plaited the meshes of the nets, she was constantly looking at this souvenir of her lover. Unconsciously her fingers reproduced the thin and delicate fibres of the seaweed in the fishing-net; and this first lace-making, primitive and coarse as it was, finally led to the invention of pillow lace.

THE expression "blue blood" had its origin in the Middle Ages. Then the aristocracy were the only class who washed themselves with any regularity, and consequently the veins, especially in the hands, showed through the skin. Veins contain impure blood which is of a bluish purple hue, and those which lie just beneath the skin appear quite blue in comparison with the delicacy and whiteness of the rest of well-kept hand. Hence the term "blue blood," and its always being applied in indication of noble birth.

"LIFE is no idle dream, but a solemn reality based on and encompassed by eternity. Find out your work and stand to it; the night cometh when no man can work."

"WHATEVER withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings."

WHEN gilt picture-frames have become discoloured they may be brightened, if not altogether restored, by washing them with a preparation of flowers of sulphur and water. Enough sulphur should be used to make the water yellow, then two cut-up onions should be put in it and the mixture boiled upon a fire. When the liquid is cold, it should be strained from the sulphur and onions and applied to the picture-frames with a soft brush.

"How simple great men's rules are! How easy it is to be a great man! Order, diligence, patience, honesty—just what you and I must use to put our dollar in the savings-bank, to do our school-boy sum, to keep the farm thrifty, and the house clean, and the babies neat. Order, diligence, patience, honesty! There is wide difference between men, but truly it lies less in some special gift or opportunity granted to one and withheld from another than in the differing degree in which these common elements of human nature are owned and used. Not how much talent have I, but how much will to use the talent that I have? is the main question. Not how much do I know, but how much do I do with what I know? To do their great work the great ones need more of the very same habits which the little ones need to do their smaller work. They share not achievements, but conditions of achievement with you and me. And those conditions, for them as for us, are largely the plod, the drill, the long disciplines of toil. If we ask such men their secret, they will uniformly tell us so."

IN the Natural History Museum at South Kensington there is a large section of a pine tree which has been cleverly used as a means of teaching history. The age of a tree can always be told by the number of rings disclosed when it is cut down, and this particular tree shows 533 rings and must be of the same number of years. It was therefore born in 1352, and has existed from the reign of Edward III. to within two years of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, since it was cut down in 1885. The rings have been marked off in white paint, and the dates of the important events which occurred whilst each ring was growing are also indicated, showing that when the Battle of Poitiers was fought the pine was four years old; it was twenty-five when Edward III. died. When Caxton introduced printing the tree had seen 119 summers and winters, and when Columbus discovered America it was 140 years old. Two hundred and twelve rings had appeared when Shakespeare was born, and 240 when Raleigh colonised Virginia. At the time of the Great Plague, this tree was 14 years over its third century of existence, and within six years of its fourth when the Battle of Culloden was fought. The Independence of America was proclaimed in the 424th year of this remarkable tree, and it was 485 when Queen Victoria ascended the throne, the stirring events of the greater part of the present reign being enacted during its existence.