

THE OCEAN.

As we stand then, to-night, looking forth upon the ocean, what do we behold? At first sight only a barren waste of waters, surrounding the continents and covering three-fifths of the surface of the globe. It is a pathless and desolate expanse, which seems designed to check the intercourse and to defy the authority of men. No cities are built on its heaving and treacherous breast; and the bustle of human life, the roar of human activity, ceases at its edge. The realms of space above our heads are hardly more appalling in their silence and their solitude than the boundless ocean plains, where no living thing appears to break the oppressive stillness with its movement or its cry, and only wave chases wave from end to end of the horizon. No barrier of mountains, lifting their snowy summits to the clouds, would seem to arrest the progress and mock the power of mankind, like this great wall of water which the Almighty hand has reared around the nations.

But man has conquered the sea, and if you observe it again, you will perceive that it is not a barrier to keep nations apart, but a bond to bring them near and to unite them together. The trackless expanse, at which we were just now looking, is furrowed by a million keels. The cunning of the human mind has traced upon it a network of paths, along which the commerce of the world swiftly and safely moves. Its dreary solitudes are bright with sails, and the music of human voices has broken the spell of silence which had settled upon it; science and daring have robbed it of its terrors, and have brought it into subjection to the human will. It has become a great and free highway, over which thought and wealth may pass from land to land. It has made all the nations neighbors, and widely sundered peoples familiar friends. To traverse it is no longer a matter of desperate adventure, it is an incident of a holiday. It has been explored, mapped out, subdued, and the voyage across it, which was once involved in hardly less uncertainty and peril than that in which a soul sets forth upon the unknown ocean of another life, is now an experience of which almost every detail may be anticipated and of which the end may be predicted to an hour. When forty-six years ago the French astronomer sent word to all the observatories of Europe that on such a night, at such a point in the heavens, a new planet might be seen, it was rightly held to be a marvellous example of the power of the human mind. But it is a hardly less signal display of man's mastery over nature, when, after pushing steadily forward for many days, through sunshine and storm, through mist and darkness, on the North Atlantic, the captain of the vessel in which you are sailing says quietly to you: "At nine o'clock this evening, in that direction, you will see the light on Fastnet Rock." The ocean has been tamed and civilized and made a part of the habitable globe.—*Rev. E. B. Cox, D.D.*

"NOTHING TO READ."

Many and many a time we have all heard this said, I presume, and Flora McFlimsy, with her "nothing to wear," has often arisen, perhaps, as a suitable companion piece. Because the last new novel doesn't lie on the table, or the latest magazine, does it follow there is nothing to read? I confess to have had this feeling myself, sometimes, and so been compelled to take down some of the good old books from their shelves—where they had lain so long that if they had not been very good indeed they would most certainly have spoiled—and have been thoroughly astonished at my own ignorance, in allowing such treasures to lie so idly by me, my soul or intellect going hungry meantime. As there are no better friends than the old friends; no better songs than the old songs; no grander hymns than those that have long been consecrated by church usage; and no music sweeter than the notes to which we listened in far away times and in far away places; so the dear books, those which have been tried and tested by other generations and "pronounced good," may be trusted now. They have an old wise flavour better than the new; an odour of old thyme and forget-me-nots that revives other days and other times, and we grow broader and wiser as we spread the years before us that our fathers knew. The books of to-day are written hurriedly for these swift times—the lighter literature, I mean—and consequently have but a present, fleeting value. The old books—our standard literature—are like rocks that the waves of ocean have beaten and battered without injury; standing the cleaner and the whiter for the washing of the centuries. Let the old books be brought forward. We will find in them a beauty seen only in age; a beauty of silvered hair and the genial sunshine of years.

PRICE OF ELEPHANTS.

The Moors who drive a trade in elephants throughout the Indies, have a fixed price for the ordinary type, according to their size. To ascertain their true value, they measure from the nail of the fore foot to the top of the shoulder, and for every cubit high they give at the rate of £100 of our money. An African elephant of the largest size measures about nine cubits, or thirteen and a half feet, in height, and is worth about £900; but for the huge elephants of the Island of Ceylon four times that sum is given. Had Jumbo been measured by the same standard, what would have been his real value in money?—*Notes and Queries.*

COLLECTING OLD POSTAGE STAMPS.

Some years ago the inquiry was started in France, why the convents and congregations collected the old postage stamps by the million. The French postmaster-general, struck by the singularity of the fact that none of the religious congregations ever purchased postage stamps, investigated the subject, and was told that the priests of each diocese received large quantities of stamps from correspondents desirous of making offerings or paying for masses, and that these were used in paying for letters. He was not satisfied with this explanation, and commissioned M. Marc, the chief of the detective service, to make further investigations. The

official reported that the convents collected old stamps that had been used to sell them again to dealers in various parts of the world, to be absorbed by collectors. M. Cochery was not satisfied with this explanation, which proceeded on the assumption that several millions of philatelists were yearly added to many millions already interested in the collection of stamps of various nations. This year the Post-office Department has renewed its inquiries, stimulated by the fact that the work of collecting old stamps is going on more actively than ever, and that several dealers have opened their shops in Paris. M. Cochery has his suspicions that all is not honest in this business, but the Paris authorities decline to co-operate any further, and thus the matter stands. This same thing has been done extensively in other places, but it is for no good purpose in the end. Stamps cannot be collected in quantities at any cost excepting for the purpose of defrauding the government, by cleaning and using them over again.

THE LILAC.

I feel too tired and too old
Long rambles in the woods to take,
To seek the cowslip's early gold,
And search for violets in the brake
Nor can I, as I used to, bend
My little bed of flowers to tend;
Where grew my scented pinks, to-day
The creeping witch-grass has its way.

But when my door I open wide
To breathe the warm sweet air of spring,
The fragrance comes in like a tide,
Great purple plumes before me swing;
For looking in, close by the door,
The lilac blossoms as of yore;
The earliest flower my childhood knew
Is to the gray, worn woman true.

Dear common tree, that needs no care,
Whose root in any soil will live,
How many a dreary spot grows fair
With the spring charm thy clusters give!
The narrow court yard in the town
Knows thy sweet fragrance; and the brown,
Low, hill-side farm house hides its eaves
Beneath the gray-green of thy leaves.

Loosed by the south wind's gentle touch,
In perfumed showers thy blossoms fall,
Thou asketh little, givest much;
Thy lavish bloom is free to all;
And even I, shut in, shut out,
From all the sunny world about,
Find the first flower my childhood knew
Is to the gray, worn woman true.

DISTANCE OF THE SUN.

Some of the revised figures and opinions concerning the sun, as the result of the most recent observations, aided by improved methods and appliances, are of peculiar interest. Thus, the former calculations, which placed the sun at 95,000,000 miles from the earth, and which remained unquestioned for so many years, are now changed, on the highest authority, so as to present a mean distance of 93,100,000 miles. Not less interesting are those investigations which deal with the solar temperature, respecting which the most diverse opinions have existed until lately among men of science, these opinions differing, in fact, all the way from millions to the comparatively low temperature of 3,632° Fahrenheit. The figures now most generally received are those of Professor Rosetti, of Padua, who, after the most profound and prolonged study, places the sun's temperature at about 18,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Another notable fact is the recent discovery of oxygen in the sun's atmosphere—the first discovery, indeed, of the existence of any non-metallic element there.

CHEERFULNESS IN CHILDREN.

A very small matter will arouse a child's mirth. How still the house is when the little ones are fast asleep and their pattering feet are silent! How easily the fun of a child bubbles forth! Take even those poor prematurely aged little ones bred in the gutter, cramped in unhealthy homes, and ill used, it may be by drunken parents, and you will find that the child's nature is not all crushed out of them. They are gleeful children still, albeit they look so haggard and weary. Try to excite their mirthfulness, and ere long a laugh rings out as wild and free as if there were no such thing as sorrow in the world. Let the dear little ones laugh then; too soon, alas! they will have cause to weep. Do not try to check or silence them, but let their gleefulness ring out a glad some peal, reminding us of the days when we too could laugh without a sigh, and sing without tears.

DEAD STARS.

Like the sand of the sea, the stars of heaven have ever been used as effective symbols of number, and the improvements in our methods of observation have added fresh force to our original impressions.

We now know that our earth is but a fraction of one out of at least 75,000,000 worlds. But this is not all. In addition to the luminous heavenly bodies, we cannot doubt that there are countless others, invisible to us from their greater distance, smaller size, or feebleness of light; indeed, we know that there are many dark bodies which now emit no light, or comparatively little. Thus in the case of Procyon, the existence of an invisible body is proved by the movement of the visible star. Again, I may refer to the curious phenomena presented by Algol, a bright star in the head of Medusa. This star shines without change for two days; then in three hours and a half dwindles from a star of the second

to one of the fourth magnitude; and then, in another three and a half hours, reassumes its original brilliancy. These changes seem to indicate the presence of an opaque body which intercepts at regular intervals a part of the light emitted by Algol.

Thus the floor of heaven is not only "thick inlaid with patterns of bright gold," but studded also with extinct stars—once probably as brilliant as our own sun, but now dead and cold, as Helmholtz tells us that our sun itself will be some seventeen millions of years hence.

FISHING WITH ELECTRIC LIGHT.

A French yachting paper describes the new apparatus which is used with the permission of the Government of that country for fishing by electricity at night. It consists of a globe of glass within which the electric light is shown. Two conductors encased in gutta-percha are arranged so as to meet one another on the inside, very much on the same principle which is now familiar to all visitors to the Crystal Palace. They communicate with a fishing boat anchored at a convenient distance, and can, of course, be set into activity by the occupants of the boat. As to the globe, it is attached to a weight below and a float above, so that it can be raised or lowered to the desired depth. As soon as the carbons are ignited and the glass is in proper position, all the sea in its vicinity is illuminated brilliantly, and the fish, over whom light is well known to exercise an irresistible influence at night, come eagerly, and sometimes in large schools, within the rays. They may be seen from above disputing themselves in the unaccustomed brightness, and little dreaming of the sinister purpose with which the little fête is organized for them. It is then that other fishing-boats, armed with nets, come up and set to work at the unconscious victims, which they surround as well as they can without interfering with the apparatus connected with the lighted globe. It may be supposed that this device is calculated to operate with much deadly effect whenever it is used, and there seems to be much doubt whether it will ever be allowed as a recognised kind of fishing within territorial waters. Indeed, the license granted by the Government is said to be merely provisional, and for the purpose of testing the new machine.

GEMS.

The rarest of all gems is not the diamond, which follows after the ruby. This in its turn allows precedence to the chrysoberyl—popularly known as the cat's-eye. The true stone comes from Ceylon, though Pliny knew of something similar, under the name of zimilampis, found in the bed of the Euphrates. Can we wonder, when we look at one of these singular productions of nature, with its silvery streaks in the centre, and observe, as we move it ever so slightly, the magic rays of varying light that illumine its surface, that it was an object of profound reverence to the ancients? The possessor was supposed never to grow poorer, but always to increase his substance. The largest known is now in the possession of Mr. Bryce Wright, the well-known mineralogist. It is recorded in the annals of Ceylon, and known to history as the finest in the world. Two stars of lesser magnitude shine by its side, and we are informed that three such stones are not known to exist elsewhere in the wide world.—*London Graphic.*

WEATHER AFFECTING THE MIND.

Dull, depressing, dingy days produce dispiriting reflections and gloomy thoughts, and small wonder when we remember that the mind is not only a motive, but a receptive organ, and that all the impressions it receives from without reach it through the medium of senses which are directly dependent on the condition of light and atmosphere for their action, and therefore immediately influenced by the surrounding conditions. It is a common-sense inference that if the impressions from without reach the mind through imperfectly-acting organs of sense, and those impressions are themselves set in a minor aesthetic key of colour, sound, and general qualities, the mind must be what is called "moody." It is not the habit of sensible people to make sufficient allowance for this rationale of dullness and subjective weakness. Some persons are more dependent on external circumstances and conditions for their energies—or the stimulus that converts potential kinetic forces—than others; but all feel the influence of the world without, and to this influence the sick and the weak are especially responsive. Hence the varying temperaments of mind changing with the weather, the outlook and the wind.—*Anon.*

FENIAN emissaries are said to be actively engaged against the English in Egypt.

FRANCE proposes to make a thorough extermination of the wolves that infest some of its districts.

GUITEAU's avenger has appeared in the shape of a crank from Chicago, who has gone to Washington.

A SIMLA despatch says 12,000 men could be assembled in Bombay for transport to Egypt in twenty-four hours.

OFFICIAL statistics show that there are 1,580 Americans or Irish Americans in Dublin without visible occupation.

THE last clause of the Repression Bill was passed in the Imperial House of Commons by a vote of 69 to 6, after a 32 hours' sitting.

FLEMING, a Director of the City of Glasgow Bank, has been sentenced to eight months' imprisonment for connection with the failure of the bank.

MR. FRANCIS MURPHY completed his month's temperance crusade in Aberdeen on the 29th ult., when between 2,000 and 3,000 persons assembled in the Music Hall. It was announced that 25,000 persons had accepted the blue ribbon badge in the city, of whom, however, 10,000 were rectifiers previous to the visit of Mr. Murphy.