

Our contributor, "P. S. H.," whose letter appears on page 6, asks information on a matter about which we have no knowledge. If any of our readers can tell us anything about the "Reesor Patent Ventilator," we shall be pleased to publish it. It is certainly strange that such a valuable invention as that described by our correspondent should have gone out of use—perhaps passed into oblivion.

Much interest has been taken in the experiments recently made by the military authorities at Ottawa with carrier pigeons. In this connection it is interesting to know that swallows are now being used in France by the military authorities instead of pigeons. A test was recently made at Raubo, and fifteen of the birds were given absolute freedom of wing for the first time. They flew in different directions, and in about twenty minutes one came back and perched on the trainer's out-stretched finger. In half an hour every swallow had returned. If the homing instinct is as strong in the swallows as in the pigeons, there is no reason why they should not be utilized as messengers.

The Grand Jury of St. John, N. B., has made a presentment to the court in reference to level railway crossings. This is not before it is needed. We are constantly hearing of fatal accidents on these crossings, and as there are no gates or watchmen or other protection to warn people of the approach of a train, the work of slaughter goes on. It would be best if there were no such things as level crossings, but at least the government should see to it that ample protection be provided where they already exist, and that in future the highways or streets should be carried over or under the railway by means of bridges or archways. The Grand Jury has done well in making an inquisition into this matter, and it is to be hoped that it will be speedily productive of a change from the present state of affairs.

The Chignecto Ship Railway work is being successfully carried on, and on its successful completion issues of, we may say, world wide importance hang. Not only will it save a voyage of five hundred miles around Nova Scotia to the coasting trade between the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, probably increase that trade to double its present proportions and tend to consolidate our great Dominion, but if the scheme is a success it will at once be taken as an example for similar enterprises in many places in Canada, where canals are not feasible, as well as at other important points elsewhere in the world. The possibilities of the ship railway are not yet known, and as this is the first great ship railway of the world, much importance must be attached to the experiment. It is proposed to carry vessels of 2,000 tons displacement on this railway, and there is little doubt that it will have plenty of work to do.

The public schools re-opened after the summer vacation on September 1st, and teachers and pupils ought to be, after their rest, in first rate trim for work. We understand, however, that many of the children have been unfortunate enough to take cold, and on enquiring into the matter we find that the trouble probably lies in the school houses. The month of August was a very damp one, and as the school houses were shut up, they naturally contracted a good deal of it. This could easily have been overcome by having fires lighted and thoroughly airing and drying the class rooms a few days before school opened. This should have been attended to as a necessary precaution for the health of both teachers and pupils. We understand that fires are not used until October, which, if true, should be remedied at once. We are liable to have several days in September when artificial heat is necessary for comfort and well-being, and if the pupils in our schools are to sit still with cold hands and feet, even if not shivering all over, no good work can be expected of them, and they may lay the foundation for a winter's sickness. It is certainly the duty of the School Board to see that matters of this kind are properly looked after, and the health of the teachers and pupils taken care of.

The new iron tube railway tunnel just completed, connecting Canada with the United States, under the St. Clair River, is a notable feat of engineering. It is the longest river tunnel in the world, being 6,050 feet in all, 2,300 feet of which is under the river bed. Its outside diameter is 21 feet. It is only a year since the tunnel proper was commenced, and despite the rapidity of construction, fewer casualties have attended it than any other similar work. It is the first iron tunnel of its kind. The castings which make up the lining are 4 feet 10 inches in length, 18 inches in width, and 1½ inches in thickness. Thirty-two bolts in each segment connect it with its fellows, and the completed tunnel forms an immense iron tube. It has been built for the purpose of accommodating the traffic over the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, the Chicago and Grand Trunk, the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee, and the Toledo, Saginaw and Muskegon Railways. The steam car ferry, at present in operation at this point, was found inadequate, and a bridge was impossible owing to the low level of both shores and the great amount of shipping traffic of large dimensions. The project was a Canadian idea, and has been carried to a successful issue by Canadian enterprise. The system which was made use of in driving the bore is that invented by Mr. A. E. Beach, of the *Scientific American*. The method of construction, under which the tunnel was completed as the work proceeded, is the invention of the designer of the project, Mr. Joseph Hobson, of Hamilton, the chief engineer of the Great Western Division of the Grand Trunk Railway. As soon as this tunnel is in running order, which may be by the end of the year, another will be begun alongside of it, in which the same machinery will be used. One remarkable thing about it is that it did not exceed the original estimated cost of construction, three million dollars. After being cleaned of the clay and silt which is in it, the tunnel is to be treated with a preparation to prevent rusting.

Industrial and agricultural fairs and exhibitions are valuable in promoting competition for the highest degree of excellence, and showing up the progress of the county, province, or country for which they are held. They should not be overdone, however, or they will fail of their object. There are, we believe, sixty fairs to be held in the Province of Ontario this month, and forty or fifty more in October. This is too many to be successful.

Etta Simpson, 17 years of age, whose home is in Moncton, N. B., has astonished the medical faculty and her friends by falling asleep on August 24th, since which time she has not awakened. She is said to have been in the habit of eating brown paper, the appetite being so strong that she could not see a piece without wanting to devour it. Indulgence of this morbid appetite may have something to do with her present rather precarious condition, and should be a lesson to others who are afflicted with a craving for indigestible substances. Slate pencils, paper, beans, leaves of trees, raw vegetables, bits of wood and many other such deleterious things form the chief diet of many school girls. Parents should be watchful, and if they discover their children eating such things administer a prompt corrective in the form of a good spanking, or shutting up in a dark closet, or cutting off a meal or so a day in order to produce a hungry feeling for good food.

Now would be a good time to start a society for the prevention of mis-directed philanthropy in New York, where, according to the *Press*, a home for cats is about to be built. A fine site has been secured on the banks of the Harlem, where accommodation will be provided for a thousand homeless and abandoned specimens of the felis domestica. Kindness to animals is a trait to be admired in any person, but in a case like this it is rather mistaken. The life of one child is of more value than a thousand cats, and the money that is to be expended on the proposed home would go a long way towards supplying the necessaries of life to many of the homeless human beings in the city of New York. The spirit that devotes money to such a cause as the caring for homeless cats is undoubtedly kindly, but the intellect that directs it must be of a very weak nature to allow the pressing needs of humanity to be so overshadowed. It would be far more merciful to poison the cats and use the money which would otherwise be spent on their care in promoting the comfort of homeless human beings.

Society, or at least the feminine portion of it, is occasionally stirred to its depths on the servant-girl question, as it is called. Those who are interested in this matter will find an article in the *Nineteenth Century* for August on "Domestic Service," which will repay perusal. It is written by Mrs. Francis Darwin. She argues from the servant's side of the question, which no one can deny has many grievances. She brands as a relic of feudalism the custom of demanding a formal and written character of a servant when being engaged, and thinks that every mistress should choose a referee, or two, among her servants past or present, who have been with her not less than two years, to whom the servant whom she is inclined to engage may apply for information as to the character of the mistress. Many reforms are needed in the relations of mistresses and servants to each other, but very little would be effected by the system of giving characters which Mrs. Darwin would inaugurate, unless a conscientious appreciation of their mutual duties should rule them. Mrs. Darwin's aim is to place domestic services on a higher level than they have hitherto reached.

The *Sanitary Era* for August, a progressive health journal published in New York, contains mortality, meteorological and other statistics for the first four months of the current year, of the United States and principal cities of the neighboring republic, of the principal cities of the Dominion, and of Europe, and of representative cities of Australia, India, Africa and South America. Comparison of these mortality statistics presented Halifax in very unfavorable contrast with the larger majority of the cities whose death rate is given. Of some 70 cities of the Union, only 11 have a higher death rate, and of 11 Canadian cities only Montreal, Quebec and Winnipeg contrast unfavorably with our metropolis. Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin only, of British towns, show a higher mortality rate than Halifax. With few exceptions the great European cities are assigned a very high death rate, and this, as would be expected, is also true of Indian, North African and South American cities. Comparing our city with St. John, which we are fond of doing, we find that the total deaths in the sister city, with a population estimated at 43,336, for the first five months of the current year, is 345, while the number of deaths for the same period in this city, with a population estimated at 42,000, is 425. Ottawa, with a population of 44,000, has a record of 410 deaths. Hamilton, with a population of 45,000, and Toronto, with a population of 178,000, have had respectively 373 and 1332 deaths during the same period. No city could be more healthfully situated than ours, with a splendid water supply, unexcelled drainage, accessible in every part to sea breezes, with a fine harbor in front and the common in the rear, to say nothing of plenty of open spaces and fairly broad streets. Halifax should be the healthiest city in the world. We have not taken pains to compare the statistics given by the *Sanitary Era* with other compilations of a similar description, but if the statement before us is correct we are greatly in need of sanitary reform. The Board of Health and the physicians of the city, who should in all sanitary interests be the coadjutors of the Board, should thoroughly investigate the condition of the city and take such measures as would place Halifax in the position that it should occupy as the healthiest city in the world. It must be admitted, however, and should not be forgotten, that the best efforts of Health Boards and Medical Boards and Commissioners, unaided by the co-operation of the citizens themselves, and by an enlightened and aroused public opinion, will be rewarded with but a scant measure of success.