

Monstrous Hides.

HOW THE SKINS OF THE RHINOCEROS AND BOA-CONSTRUCTOR ARE UTILIZED.

The hides of the bull, bear, cow, calf, sheep, goat, kid, and even the alligator, for years past, have been sold in the leather markets, and are considered the most desirable for the manufacture of boots, shoes, saddlery, harness and other articles for the general use and wear of both man and beast. But the ingenuity of this latter day American seems to have no limit. Forests and jungles of the sunny Eastern hemisphere have been penetrated in order to satisfy the wants of fashion and of trade. The hides of the ponderous, clumsy and ugly rhinoceros and the treacherous, venomous boa-constructor are now being turned into profitable account by manufacturers.

The hide of the rhinoceros, being of the heaviest and thickest description, would appear to many to be more serviceable for the manufacture of saddlery and harness, but this is not the case. Manufacturers and dealers in these articles have discovered this most durable leather to be of little use in their trade, because, owing to its solidity and thickness, a needle of any power or sharpness can hardly be made to penetrate it. Some two months ago a manufacturing firm tested the durability and usefulness of rhinoceros hide in the manufacture of a carriage spring. It was patented, but rhinoceros leather was in too great demand to satisfy the supply of these springs, and only by slow work could orders be furnished; then the result of this innovation developed itself, and the hide of the mighty beast, it was discovered, could not withstand as much of wear and tear as the delicate kid, if made in the same thickness and applied to the same uses.

The skin was tanned and imported here by foreign concerns, and when placed on sale, brought very high prices. Its general utility was not known to a very great extent until lately. At present the hide of the rhinoceros is chiefly adapted to the manufacture of jewellers' buffing wheels, which are required in making a polish on gold jewellery, like that brought out in burnishing brass. In Germany and England there are about a dozen tanneries where the skin of the rhinoceros is prepared for the market.

The skins are sent to the tanneries direct from Africa, in some cases by regular hunting expedition parties. It requires from two to three years' time to prepare the hides of these huge monsters for the leather market. When the time and cost required are taken into consideration, the cost of rhinoceros leather after importation is considerable.

From one whole rhinoceros skin it is estimated that at least 250 pounds can be easily secured for utilization from the tannery, and when assorted will, when sold, bring from \$300 to \$400. Although it takes nearly three years to prepare one of these hides for the market, at least 100 could be run through the process at the same time.

The skins of the boa-constructors are supplied through the European market, but are directly brought from the deep forests of both Asia and Africa. The serpents are trapped and secured by the slaves of Oriental, Turkish and Egyptian tradespeople, who have long been supplying the demands of snake charmer, showmen and stylish dames and damsels of foreign countries. The snakes are often worn around the necks and arms of these people while alive. They are made harmless by the skill of the necromancer or serpent-doctor, who is honoured for his wonderful powers in successfully tearing out the fangs and drawing the deadly poison from these serpents.

Ladies, waist belts and chateaines are worn made of the serpents' skins upon the streets daily. Such appliances create curiosity wherever seen, looking so wild and barbarous in their design as to cause doubt as to their genuineness. They bring good prices. Card, cigarette and cigar cases and porte-monnaies are made to order from the same material, as well as small satchels and shopping bags. In securing these king serpents of the forest and jungle, the greatest of dangers are encountered.

The manner of preparing the skins for the tannery is of a delicate nature. After the serpent has been put to death by a means that will preserve the skin from any injury, the body is passed over to a taxidermist, who strips the hide as he would the skin from an eel. The tanner doctors the frail hide so that it becomes perfectly pliable, and retains all its natural appearance and colour as in life. Boa-constructors, though a very ferocious and dangerous species of serpent,

are also of a very costly order to obtain. In this country they have heretofore been considered only in the light of an attractive feature among many curiosities attached to a circus, side show, or private or public museum.

GENERAL.

A MAN committed suicide at Columbia, Ky., by tying a handkerchief around his neck and tightening it with a cane.

THE New-Zealanders are destroying their forests in a manner so reckless that there is a fear not only of a scarcity of timber, but that the climate will soon be changed for the worse.

SOME one has said, what thousands have observed, there is nothing that keeps longer than a middling fortune, and nothing melts away sooner than a great one. Poverty treads upon the heels of great and unexpected riches.

TWO Texas desperadoes agreed to fight with knives in a closed room at Fort Worth. They put up their watches as forfeit, and, as both had shown reckless daring in former affrays, it was believed they fully intended a deadly duel. They were prevented by arrest.

A MECHANIC at Beaufort, S. C., intent upon suicide by drowning, but desirous that his body should be recovered, fastened lead to his head and life preservers to his feet before leaping into the water. So he was quickly drowned, while his logs floated.

THE recent earthquake at Lisbon, Portugal, seems to have caused little damage; but it recalls the disastrous one of 1765, by which that city and about 60,000 people were destroyed. Severe shocks have also been experienced lately in other Spanish towns and in sections of France.

So the Prince of Wales is 39 years of age. He may be as much again before the Queen takes it into her head either to die or to resign. Really this longevity trick leaves a young fellow no show whatever. He is used up and gouty before he has the slightest opportunity of showing what he can do. Well, well. There is no help for it but patience. All things come to him who can wait.

RECENTLY Prof. Huxley said that ninety-nine men out of every hundred became simply obstructed after sixty years old, and were not flexible enough to yield to the advance of new ideas. The world, he thought, would be benefited by any man who had taken part in science being strangled after sixty. This may be meant for Brother Ruskin, who lately wrote to Glasgow students that he loathed liberalism.

JUSTICE SMITH said, on opening his court at Connorsville, Tenn.: "Well Henry Smith is arraigned for assaulting his father." The magistrate had on the previous day knocked his father down with a club, and it was himself that he was now arraigning. He continued: "The evidence is conclusive, and I'm not sure but I ought to send myself to jail for ten days. But, as this is my first offence, and I certainly had a good deal of provocation, I will simply impose a fine of ten dollars."

THE *Londonderry Sentinel* says: "At all events, so far as Ulster is concerned, she will not shrink her duty; and it will be well for our rulers to remember, ere too late, that if they leave the loyal and well-disposed people of Ireland much longer to the mercy of demagogues and assassins, and the present reign of terror is allowed to continue, the men of the north may again be compelled to seek stronger remedies for the protection of their lives, property, and liberties." The rebellion of 1798 began among the Presbyterians of Ulster, a circumstance of which few are aware.

THAT the hardest steel is not the most durable for railroads appears from an examination of the wear of some of the steel rails on the Great Northern line, England. Seven of the rails, which lay side by side on this road, were taken up and tested, and it was found in one instance, that a hard rail had been worn away one-sixteenth of an inch by traffic amounting to 5,251,000 tons, while soft rails for the same amount of wear had withstood 8,402,000 tons for the hard rail and 31,061,000 tons for the soft rail, the wear being the same—one-sixteenth of an inch. Analysis showed this last rail to consist of 99.475 per cent of iron, and minute quantities of carbon, phosphorus, silicon, manganese, sulphur, and copper.

A Rebel Telegrapher.

EXPERIENCE RELATED BY EX-GOV. BULLOCK OF GEORGIA.

Many times, and in various ways through life, my practical experience as a telegrapher has been of valuable service to me. It is, perhaps, not entirely forgotten that, a few years ago, there was a "misunderstanding" among the politicians, and that ultimately the able-bodied men on either side made a good deal of noise about it. Well, I was on the south side of that noise, and, being patriotic but not belligerent, I gave my uniform to a chap who thought he had an enemy, and devoted my energies to finding some to serve the confederacy efficiently that did not at the same time involve the risk of a stray bullet depriving the government of my usefulness. There was quite a number of other patriots in the express company's management who harmonized in my idea; and, as a natural consequence, we were soon impressed with the great necessity that existed for the express company to build and operate telegraph wires over routes not covered by existing lines. Several of us were also stockholders in the American Telegraph company, and when the noise hitherto spoken of interfered with "sound reading" between Washington and Richmond, we felt it to be our duty to take charge of the lines this side, and we became the "Southern Telegraph company." You will see that, with all this array of usefulness, it would, indeed, be an unwise and thoughtless, not to say hard-hearted, conscript officer who would believe it his duty to send us to the front as musket bearers! If he could see, as many of them did, the tireless industry with which express men devoted themselves to the study of dots and dashes—beating a tattoo for freedom on office desks, car safes, eating-house tables, in fact anywhere that would echo the evidence that they were telegraphers and entitled to exemption—the certificate of "detail on telegraph duty" would be sure to come.

To pass the inspection of the conscript officers it was necessary for the traveler to have "duty orders," "furlough," "exemption papers," or a black skin; you can therefore imagine the satisfaction a patriot would feel when he exhibited his detail as a telegraph operator and knew that he was more likely to serve his country to the end of the war than the poor fellow with but one arm or one leg, traveling home on furlough.

Many of the inconveniences of the early telegraph days were repeated here during the war. Insulators were made of clay with a glazing. For wire we depended on the uncertainties of blockade-running and the Morris wire-mill, at Richmond, which turned out only short lengths, and few of these. Old magnets were reword and old instruments rebuilt. Nitric acid was hardly obtainable, and substitutes hard to be discovered and used; but the wires were kept working and new lines were rebuilt.

When Gen. Sherman started on his excursion from Atlanta to Richmond, via Savannah, active industries on that route were inaugurated for telegraphers as well as fighters. The coast lines were generally abandoned, and nearly all the business was transmitted over the express wires.

On the morning of the evacuation of Columbia, I left our office and affairs there in charge of Mr. Soule, our telegraph operator, and that night I, being at Gen. Beauregard's headquarters, held telegraphic communications with Soule, he being in Columbia and within Gen. Sherman's command! This, I presume, was the only peaceful communication ever held by telegraph between the contending parties during the war, and might, perhaps, have been less peaceful for Soule and myself if it had been known to either commander.

Probably the most useful service ever rendered by our telegraph was in transmitting information of the surrender, and letters from Gen. Sherman, at Raleigh, to Gen. Wilson, at Macon, to cease operations, thereby saving Macon, Augusta, and other places from hostile occupation. The express wires through the interior part of the country were the only ones in operation at that time.

In boring for water in the Wampanoag district, Victoria, recently, a tree was passed through for 6 feet at a depth of 250 feet, and the cup brought up several fruit-stones similar to the nuts of plums; some were smashed, but the kernels were recognizable. It seemed evident that there was a grove of trees there.

MONEY is being so freely contributed for the purpose of clothing and civilizing benighted Africans that it is becoming profitable to go to Africa and be a heathen.

SCIENTIFIC GOSSIP.

PROF. TANNANIA attributes the immediate cause of death by hanging to the closing of the respiratory organs.

Those who will smoke cigars would do well to use a mouthpiece of some kind or other. It has been ascertained that some of the ways in which cigars are made are apt to cause a mouth of a dangerous and persistent kind by transmitting the poison which is said to be so prevalent in China as to be the bane of that country.

THE lighting of the reading-room of the British Museum by the Siemens electric lamp has been resumed for the winter. The apparatus of the lamps are now fitted above the area; brown japanned reflectors send the light to the floor, and topaz-colored glass screens are placed beneath the arc to intercept the blue rays which interfere with the purity of the light.

THE electric lamp can prove quite as fatal as the kerosene lamp, each in its own way, of course, if people do not take care. Recently one of the men on board the Czar's new yacht, the *Livadia*, was asked to support an electric lamp for a short time before it was hoisted into position. In some way or other he managed to divert the current from the candle and sent it through his body, and he died instantly.

EXCELLENT work will no doubt be done in the near future at the Warner Astronomical Observatory at Rochester. The telescope—the third largest in the United States—will be 23 feet long, and will have a lens 16 inches in diameter. Prof. Swift will have, with this telescope, a wider field for his powers of observation than have proved to be so fertile under less advantageous circumstances.

As a simple lecture-room experiment illustrating the appearance of ozone when liquids are evaporated, Dr. R. Bootiger recommends the following: A piece of paper is evenly moistened with starch containing iodide of cadmium. A few drops of alcohol or ether is ignited. When the flame is extinguished the paper will be of a decidedly blue color, from the action of the ozone formed during the evaporation.

A COMMISSION of 27 members will carry out the revision of the German "Pharmacopoeia" at Berlin. Sixteen professors from various universities, five apothecaries, and six physicians and surgeons of high standing in their vocations, make up the commission. Besides these, the forthcoming work will have the benefit of the experience of two military physicians and a military surgeon, who have been specially selected by the Prussian War Office. The labors of these men were commenced fully a fortnight ago, and the result is expected to be of a very high quality.

IN a recently published paper by Mr. W. O. Crosby and Mr. G. H. Barton on the "Extension of the Carboniferous Formation in Massachusetts," the authors infer that although the Norfolk County basin contains only beds of the carboniferous age, yet it is improbable that coal will ever be discovered in its limits, this narrow trough having become filled with sediments, and converted into dry land before the deposition of the true coal measures began, and this later formed series having been a always apparently restricted to a comparatively small part of the main or Narragansett basin.

THE people of Sheffield, England, have the privilege of using an equatorially mounted telescope in the Public Museum under the direction of the curator. Many an ambitious student in this City would be most thankful to the man who would provide a like aid here for the verification of known and the discovery of new facts. Our intelligent citizens also would find in it a means of elevating an stimulating mental pleasure. We should not long be without even a better instrument if some of our rich and thoughtful men would give the matter their attention.

A PAPER by M. Poirat was read before the French Academy of Sciences, recently, in which he alleged that he had never seen flies, ants, worms, or even scorpions, tarantulas, or rattlesnakes in those places in North America where absinth plants prevail. He urges the cultivation of the plant as an insecticide, and especially as a preventative against the ravages of the phylloxera. There might probably be safety to the vines, he thinks, if the land were manured with absinthe, as such a course would tend to interrupt, or prove absolutely fatal to, the metamorphoses of the phylloxera.