



Life, Literature and Education.

[Contributions on all subjects of popular interest are always welcome in this Department.]

PEOPLE, BOOKS, AND DOINGS.

A new substance called molybdate of uranium, which contains many of the radio-active properties of radium, has been discovered by a young French student named Andre Lancien. The substance differs very materially from radium in that it is not at all expensive.

The engagement of the author, Sir Conan Doyle, and Miss Jean Leckie, has been announced. Sir Conan is forty-eight years of age, and is one of England's trio of most celebrated old bachelors. The other two are Sir Thomas Lipton, of yachting fame, and Sir Thomas Dewar.

It is said that J. Pierpont Morgan is negotiating for the purchase of two very ancient French convents, the Abbey Fontevault and the Abbey Solesmes. The former contains the tombs of Henry II. of England and his wife, and of Richard Cœur de Lion and his wife Isabel.

The airship "America," in which the Wellman party will essay to fly from Spitzbergen to the North Pole, is 183 feet in length, and 52.5 feet at its greatest diameter. The steel car beneath it is 115 feet in length, and the height from the bottom of the car to the top of the gas reservoir is 65 feet. The surface of the gas reservoir is 24,000 square feet, and the weight of the envelope of cotton, silk and rubber which surrounds it is two tons. The ship, when going at full speed, in calm weather, will go from 15 to 18 statute miles, or 13 to 16 sea miles, per hour. It will be navigated by four men—a surgeon, an airship-builder, a scientist, and Mr. Wellman himself—and the total distance covered from Spitzbergen to the Pole and back will, if accomplished, be 1,236 sea miles.

Mlle. de la Ramee, the once famous novelist, known as "Ouida," has been placed upon the British civil list as the recipient of a pension of \$750 a year. Financial troubles have come thick and fast upon her during the last few years, and at times she has been in actual want of food. She still, however, indulges her liking for dogs, in so far as to keep three; in Florence, during her palmy days, she kept at least thirty, besides forty horses. Mlle. de la Ramee is now sixty-seven years of age.

THE PRINTING-OFFICE OF TO-DAY AND YESTERDAY.

By an Old-time Printer.

Long, long ago, if reckoned by the intervening mechanical development, yet not so very long as the actual years have passed, a small boy, timorously, and in a fever of nervous dread, climbed the long, dark stairway leading to the composing-room of a morning newspaper office. He had secured a "job," and this was his first night. It was the realiza-

tion of a long-cherished ambition, yet, as he approached his enchanted goal, he was fearful, and his hand trembled as it touched the latch of the door, from behind which there came a buzzing, as of many voices. Having overcome an almost irresistible desire to rush out of the building and back home again, he drew a deep breath and stepped into a long, low room, the ceiling of which was black with smoke from many gas-jets and the pipes of more than one generation of smokers. Along one side of the room were racks, or frames, and upon these were placed the cases of type, before which the men sat, or stood, as the mood possessed them. On the other side were arranged the galley-racks and the "dump," where the type was deposited as each man filled his "stick," and there was always a race to see who would have the first stickful dumped. Further down the room were the composing-stones, upon which the different articles were assembled and made up into pages before being sent down to the press-room; at the far end stood the proofreader's desk, and beyond that the editorial room.

opinions on the subject under review. But when the question of typesetting machines was introduced there appeared to ensue an intellectual panic. Sane and sound as the compositors were on all other subjects, on the matter of setting type by machinery they were all at sea. The usual conception of a mechanical typesetter was a huge monstrosity, something after the fashion of a "daddy long-legs," with innumerable arms that would reach out over the "case" and pick up the letters from the different boxes. The thing was unanimously decided to be impossible, and one veteran "hobo" back from the tall timbers just about expressed the general sentiments when he declared that, "If they invent a machine that will read that stuff the 'old man' writes, I'll swallow my shoes, patches and all," the unsanitary condition of said shoes notwithstanding. The old vet.'s frequent and rueful reference to the chirography of the editor-in-chief was provoked by an incident which occurred on his initial night as a "sub." on this particular paper. The old man, as the chief editor was familiarly dubbed in the seclusion of the com-

hours later in a condition that his juvenile satanic majesty described as "perfectly spifficated." Indeed, their overburdened legs refused to assist in their ascension of the stairway, so they wandered into the press-room and tucked themselves cosily up on the mailing tables, one on either side of the room, where, through the treachery of old Morpheus, they fell easy prey to the minions of that nether region, who, with the assistance of unlimited quantities of various-colored poster-ink, decorated their "mugs" with such hieroglyphics as would have caused the ancient Egyptians to sit up and take notice, or fierce old Sitting Bull wither up with envy. They were found there by the comps. in the morning, and then was the climax of absurdity reached, for, as they were shaken into consciousness and began to rub their weary eyes, they each became aware of the other's condition, while entirely ignorant of their own, and while they pointed at one another and laughed in a half-drunken and maudlin way at what each considered a huge joke on the other, they presented such an utterly ridiculous spectacle that the grouchy old pressman almost laughed himself into convulsions.

But now the presiding "devil" (by which designation the latest apprentice was always honored) took charge of the new boy, showed him where to hang his coat, and, waiving the formality of an introduction, commenced his initiation by sending him in to the editor for a "half-round square," and had he gone where the "night man" suggested he should go, it is safe to assume he would not have returned even at this late day. But he did not go, as other things claimed his attention. Somebody called "time," and immediately all was activity. The compositors crowded around the copy file, each man secured his "take" of copy and hurried back to his frame, and presently quiet settled over the busy room, and no sound was heard save the click, click of the type as the letters dropped into the metal composing-sticks. The typesetters of those days were nearly all piece-hands, and woe unto anyone who should make himself too conspicuous during "composition" time, for he was as sure of being crushed, metaphorically, as the unfortunate fly on the wheel of time. The embryo type watched the nimble fingers dexterously manipulate the pliant type, and he smiled as he likened them in his own mind to a flock of hungry chickens picking up corn.

All type is made with nicks on one side, so it can be set up without looking at the face, thus saving much time, as the printer can locate a type character in the case by merely glancing at the nick, pick it up, drop it into the stick, where it is held in position by the thumb of the left hand while another letter is being selected by the right, and so on continuously, without looking at the face of a single letter; after each word a blank type, called a space, being dropped in, and the line "justified" to proper length by substituting thick spaces for thin ones, or vice versa, as required, the whole being accomplished at the rate of something less than a minute for each line. These little details and many others



"Maiwand Saving the Guns."

(From a painting by R. Caton Woodville, R. L., loaned for the Toronto Exhibition, 1906, by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, England.)

Now, this small and awkward boy had long wished to become a printer, for he believed that the man who could arrange the little letters into words, and the words into stories, must be a real magician, in whose brain were stored all the secrets of the universe; and as he listened to the conversation of the men, who were distributing the type, in preparation for the real work of setting up from copy, he saw no reason to change his mind, for they talked of almost every subject under the blue, and he heard familiar mention made of things which he had thought might be known only to kings, bishops or great statesmen. They had an intelligent knowledge of the events of times past and present, and as the type dropped from their fingers into the cases the discussion went on, and each one was listened to attentively as he expounded his

posing-room, was a notoriously bad writer—almost as bad as the famous Horace Greeley himself—and as the first round of copy was being given out, the "tourist" was handed an article that had evidently been penned in a hurry. He looked at it earnestly for a moment, turned it upside down and looked again, then deliberately tore it up and threw it on the floor, while a shrewd smile overspread his frontispiece as he drawled out, "Not for mine, Willie; that brand of chaff don't hold this bird." But, alas, when he was finally persuaded that it was actually copy, and set nearly every day, he was so disgusted that he and another one-time knight of the road "jumped their cases" and went straightway forth, and not only looked upon the wine copiously that they returned some-