

NEWS OF THE DAY FROM THE EDITOR'S
PIGEON-HOLES.

AN AT-HOME AMONG CAGE BIRDS.

A very wonderful collection of the little feathered darlings that we love so well was exhibited in London a few weeks ago. All sorts and conditions of canaries were there, and goldfinches, bullfinches, chaffinches, and a good many other "finches" were there, as well as thrushes, starlings, skylarks, blackbirds, robins, jays, jackdaws, and magpies. Of course they were all looking, or trying to look, their best, and you may be sure that where there were so many there must have been lots of music. The trouble must have been who would sing loudest, and as no bird objects to have other songs than his go on at the same time, you may imagine the orchestra. Just as the skylark was warbling out his sweetest carol, the magpie called out "Come along now." A whole flock, hundreds of them, came to the rescue of the skylark, and joined in the chorus, to teach the magpie manners, but speedily others of his ken broke in with "Charlie," "Mother," whistling, barking, mewing, laughing, and a host of things that we never thought birds could do. It must have been a grand sight—there were nearly three thousand of them—but as to the sound,—well, perhaps even that we should excuse. We love little dickies so.

CARDS AMONG THE LADIES.

The ladies of the upper ten in England are following in the footsteps of their brothers in card-playing. Even a little dainty gambling adds spice to the amusement. Bézique is the most popular game, and a new variety has been invented called "Rubicon," for which four packs of cards are required. My Lady carries her bézique box with her in her carriage on her visiting expeditions, and as occasion offers she has a turn at her favourite pastime. It is whispered to me that these fair ladies can fill up a betting-book with very little pinch of conscience, neat and dainty books in morocco, with silver mountings. Sometimes the crest and monogram are stamped in gold on the covers.

In everything, nowadays, there must be a stake, even in our amusements.

YOUNG LADIES AT WAR WORK.

The English Post Office has long been famous for the numbers of young women employed in the departments. They have proved themselves the equals of their brothers in most of the work, and their superiors in some points. The War Office is now finding out the same thing, and the proportion of young women employed in these offices is regularly increasing. The War Office is one of the last that we should have expected to yield to the invasion, as it has been the greatest stickler for things that have been instead of things that might be. But time wears on. The world will take, in the long run, what suits it best.

A FOX AND A CAT.

As a souvenir of the late snow storms in Scotland, a writer tells a story of his cat. His favourite pet, a big, strong, black Tom, had disappeared one morning, and as his master was going out he found the tracks of Mr. Puss in the snow. Curiosity led him to follow them up,

and not far distant they led him to a scene of terrible conflict. Puss must have been fighting, and with no ordinary foe, as was evident by the levelling the snow had received. Upon closer examination of the marks, Tom's antagonist turned out to have been a fox—and a good sized one too, and what is better, he must have been vanquished, as he was seen retreating to his den with his tail on, but not much more. Mr. Tom went home, stroked his coat all over, and sat down by the parlour fire, as if nothing had happened.

A LADY EXPLORER.

Talking of our Articles by Lieut. Stairs on Darkest Africa, reminds me that a lady has set out for the same dread region, to "experience." Experience is the craze of the period, and this lady, Mrs. French Sheldon, has gone only with one lady attendant, a European. Mrs. Sheldon will travel through Africa in a palanquin made of strong and light bamboo work, which will be carried by four trusted Zanzibari porters. The palanquin looks most inviting, and is said to contain all the comforts and even the luxuries of our finest Pullman cars. When the adventurous ladies left, Mrs. Sheldon was dressed in a becoming grey mantle, trimmed with light fur, and held in her hand enormous bouquets of lily of the valley and violets. They were sent off with cheers from a large crowd of interested spectators.

Mrs. Sheldon is the Lady of the Day.

A SCHOOL OF MUSIC FOR BIRDS.

It takes a good deal to teach a donkey, but it has been done. His performances during the past winter in London have been the event of the season. But he is an awkward pupil, is a donkey, and, to say the least of it, a cumbrous accessory to any stage. But the caterers for our hours of idleness must be original.

Bullfinches are being trained as professional singers, and a college has been opened for their vocal education. They are taught by a hand-organ, which plays in their presence all day long, and from which they pick up the tune. A fairly clever bullfinch can acquire two distinct tunes in this way, but their airs and graces do more for them than their notes. Their little heads go sleeking around in a very amusing fashion, and they nod and quiz as if they knew all about it and more. It takes about a year and a half to make them ready for the public, and then they will make their début, be advertised, and all the rest of it.

ABOUT BANKS.

"Walk Clerks," in the London Banks, have their own special district in the city. They go from bank to bank, and among business and private houses on bank business, and have a leather case chained round their waist, concealed of course, in which they often carry large sums of money. When they bring in their reports with their money, it is then that the bank sneak tries his little game. He very often succeeds too.

The Editor regrets that, owing to an unforeseen delay, the STAIRS ARTICLES cannot commence till next week. When our readers remember that the Ocean and spring storms lie between our author and our office, little explanation is needed.