

THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE LINCOLN, NEB., THURSDAY, FEB. 11, 1892.

ABOUT OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO BRIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE.

The Lawyer's Ghost--A Revengeful Little Bird--Explanations of Foreign Weights--Hard Things to Say--Polite Boys.

The Lawyer's Ghost.

A lawyer and a bishop, perhaps the bishop should come first, were talking, and this was the manner of their talk:

"I have become thoroughly convinced," said the lawyer, "of the existence of nocturnal apparitions, for I have seen one!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the bishop. "I am very curious. Relate the story."

"I will, my lord, I will," said the lawyer. "It was between the hours of eleven and twelve, I had gone to bed, and was just falling into my first comfortable sleep, when I was wakened by a strange creaking noise.

It sounded as if some one was walking up stairs! The steps sounded nearer and nearer, slower and slower; solemn and measured they were, and presently they halted at my door. I drew the sheet over my head, and lay there trembling, not daring to move.

"Something," continued the lawyer, "entered my room, and threw the sheet over my face. I felt rather than saw a faint yellow glimmering light. I could not move at first, but I presently managed to gain a little courage. I drew the sheet cautiously down from my face, and looked."

"Well!" cried the bishop, excitedly.

"In the center of the room," said the lawyer slowly, "stood a tall old man. He seemed gaunt and worn with age or hunger, and his long gray beard hung half way down his breast. He was dressed in a queer loose cloak with a cape, and he wore a broad leather band about his waist. In one hand he held a peculiarly shaped lantern, from which flowed the yellow light, making strange ghostly shadows on the wall behind him. In the other hand he held a staff the look of which was unpleasant. He stood still in the middle of the floor, looking at me. Presently I said, 'Whence art thou?' What dost thou require?"

"And what did he say?" cried the bishop, fixing his eyes upon the odd expression of the lawyer's face.

"He said"--replied the lawyer, speaking in a hoarse whisper--"he said: 'I beg your pardon, sir. I'm the watchman of the street, sir; an' I thought 'would be best for me, sir, to come up an' tell ye that yer front door stood open! If ye do be havin' it that way, sir, it's bad luck ye'll have before the mornin'!'"

A Revengeful Little Bird.

In spite of the poet, "birds" do not "in their little nests agree," but, like some people, they have a general reputation for amiability, without at all deserving it. But it seems difficult to believe that anything so small an allowance of brain as a bird has could find room in its cranium forever so small a bit of memory, and even meditate and carry out a plan of revenge. Yet this is known to be a fact. Years ago, said an English writer, I found in my garden a nest of the shrike. The young birds, four or five in number, were nearly fledged. Having heard a good deal of the predatory habits of the tribe, I was going to wire their necks. I had put them on a hedge, and they sat quite still, but looked so proud and self-possessed, and the dark, glittering eyes that were bent upon me with an expression of indignant surprise, said so plainly, "Have we not as good a right to live as you?" that my conscience smote me and I could not find it in my heart to kill them.

I walked away to call my daughter, and show them to her, and when I came back they were gone.

One morning last year I was in the garden looking at my roses, when I felt something hit the back of my head. Turning round not a little startled, I saw a bird flying up to the top of a high tree. When it had got there, it said, "Check!" Very soon afterward it came down again, flapped its wings against my head as it had done before, flew up to an opposite tree, and repeated its "Check!" At the first glance I had seen that it was a shrike.

Since then, and for several days, I could never show myself bareheaded in the garden of a morning without being assaulted or saluted in the same manner, and I soon got quite accustomed to it. When my head happened to be covered I was left alone; and neither my gardener nor any other frequenter of the garden was attacked. It is clear that the bird must have been one of the nestlings of the preceding spring or one of their parents, and that it remembered me probably as the disturber of its peace, not with any feeling of gratitude, however, for having spared a life. I might have taken, for it evidently hit me as hard as it could, and there was an unmistakable sound of revenge in its cry.

He Marked Him.

It is only the dishonest trickster who depends upon chicanery and so-called "sharp practices" to achieve success in business. The true business man builds upon honesty and integrity, knowing that with such a foundation the success he attains will not fail at last.

Thomas P. Cope, the famous Philadelphia merchant, this characteristic incident is told.

A person highly recommended, approached the Quaker merchant one day, and invited him to embark in a certain joint-stock enterprise. In a careful exposition of the matter he made it appear that the scheme was likely to succeed, and that the stock would instantly run up to a liberal premium, on being put upon the market.

"Well," said Mr. Cope, "I am satisfied upon that point; I believe it would do as thou sayest. But what will be the real value of the stock?"

"Why, as to that," answered the speculator, "I cannot say"--implying by his manner what he thought--"but that is of no account, for all we have to do is to sell out, and make our thirty or forty per cent profit."

SCIENCE AND PROGRESS.

INTERESTING DISCOVERIES IN THE FIELD OF PROGRESS.

Electric Locomotives--Solid Petroleum--Vaccination a Prevention of Influenza--Insectivorous Plants--A New Use for Aluminum.

Electric Locomotives.

An electric locomotive has recently been constructed at the works of the Thomson-Houston Company, which upon trial pulled eight loaded freight cars about a yard in what is reported to be an entirely satisfactory manner. The weight of the locomotive is given as 43,000 pounds, and its speed, "when delivering 80 horse-power at the draw-bar, is about five miles an hour." The machine was built for the Whiting Machine Company for use about their works, and we suppose there were some peculiar conditions presented which made such a machine preferable to the ordinary locomotive in this case.

Nothing, so far as we have noticed, has been given as to the expenditure of coal required to do the work, or, in other words, the efficiency of the machine; but upon the simple fact that such a machine has been built and has drawn cars, we are again entertained with predictions to the effect that the days of the steam locomotive are numbered. One electrical journal says that "the time will doubtless come when all railway traffic will be handled by electrically operated trains," and that, "in addition to the cheapness of construction of the electric locomotive, as compared with the steam locomotive, it commands itself because expensive skilled operators will not be needed to operate it." To any one who knows anything at all about railroading, this latter statement will appear ridiculous, in view of the fact that the modern railroad engineer depends more and more upon the mechanist for that part of the work which must depend upon an intimate knowledge of the machine and its construction, there being enough for the engineer to do who understands how to manage a train upon the road, and get it to its journey's end safely and on time--knowledge which is largely independent of the particular kind of machine handled by him. In short, a very large share, if not almost all of the skill acquired by locomotive engineers would be required just the same, whether steam or electricity were used as motive power.

The Distance of the Sun

Many readers may have seen the transit of Venus in 1882, when the earth's beautiful sister planet, moving in its orbit exactly between the earth and the sun, appeared upon the bright disk of the latter in the shape of a round black spot--a world in silhouette. Although almost ten years have elapsed, astronomers have hardly yet completed the computations and discussions required to give us the best possible knowledge of the sun's distance that can be derived from the observations made at that time.

Professor Answers has recently published the results of the observations made by the German astronomers during both the transit of 1882, and the previous transit of Venus in 1874. After carefully comparing the measurement made on the two occasions, and correcting, as nearly as possible all the known errors, he finds for what is known as the sun's parallax, .8'.880. This simply means that half of the diameter of the earth as seen from the sun would subtend an angle of eight seconds and eight hundred and eighty one-thousandths of a second.

The distance of the sun, as indicated by the parallax given above, would be 92,059,700 miles. But owing to probable errors in the observations which cannot be corrected, the parallax is uncertain to the extent of about one-four-hundredth part either way, so that the true distance may be as great as 92,289,700 miles, or as small as 91,829,700 miles.

This German computation makes the sun's distance somewhat less than has usually been assumed in recent text-books of astronomy. Other measurements based on the transits of 1874 and 1882 have varied from 91,850,000 miles up to 93,428,000 miles, the number generally preferred being about 92,900,000 miles; although the distance corresponding to the parallax adopted for use in the nautical almanac is about 92,400,000 miles.

At first sight it may appear surprising that there should be such wide difference in the various measures, but really the differences are not as serious as they appear to be. The sun is a body about 866,000 miles in diameter, so that the probable error, one way or the other, in any of the measures given above does not amount to more than about one-quarter of the sun's own diameter, while the variation of the distance in the course of every year, owing to the elliptical form of the earth's orbit, is more than a dozen times as great as the error in question, and twice as great as the difference between the extreme measures.

Insectivorous Plants. In an interesting paper on insectivorous plants, read before the Royal Horticultural Society, and now published in the society's journal, Mr. R. Lindsay refers to the experiments by which Mr. Francis Darwin has shown the amount of benefit accruing to insectivorous plants from nitrogenous food. Mr. Lindsay says his own experience in the culture of Dionaea is that when two sets of plants are grown side by side under the same conditions in every respect, except that insects are excluded from the one and admitted to the other, the latter, or fed plants, are found to be stronger and far superior to the former during the following season. He points out the importance of remembering that the natural conditions under which these plants are found are different from what they are under cultivation. In their native habitats they grow in very poor soil and make feeble roots, and under these conditions may require to capture more insects by their leaves to make up for their root deficiency. Under culture, however, fairly good roots for the size of plant are developed. "Darwin," says Mr. Lindsay, "mentions that the roots of Dionaea are very small; those of moderately fine plants which he examined

consisted of two branches, about one inch in length, sprouting from a bulbous enlargement. I have frequently found Dionaea roots six inches in length; but they are deciduous, and I can only conjecture that the roots mentioned by Darwin were not fully grown at the time they were measured. What is here stated of the natural habits of Dionaea applies more or less to all insectivorous plants."

Vaccination a Preventive of Influenza.

Dr. Julius Althaus's preventive against the influenza epidemic will cause a shock to the feelings of anti-vaccinationists. It is simply whole sale re-vaccination of the population with animal lymph. This well-known physician tells us that, according to data furnished by Dr. Goldschmidt, re-vaccination of this systematic kind has been lessening the occurrence and fatality of influenza in the German Army, where re-vaccination is enforced at stated intervals. It is observed that the general conditions of life amongst the troops rather tend to promote than to hinder the spread of such an epidemic amongst them, as they are more exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, have to undergo great fatigues, are badly fed, and sleep in overcrowded dormitories. Yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, it has been found that, while influenza affected 42 per cent. of the civil population of Berlin, and as much as 64 per cent. of that of Paris, its prevalence in the German Army amounted to only a trifling fraction over 11 per cent. A number of garrisons were entirely spared, while the civil populations of the towns where they were stationed suffered severely, and no garrison was ever effected where the civil population enjoyed immunity.

Wealthy Electricians. Fortune has smiled on the explorers in the field of electrical science, says an American paper. No scientific body in the United States has so many millionaires as the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. At the top of the list is Alexander Graham Bell, whose profits on the telephone are represented by eight figures. Next comes Edison, with a seven-figure fortune. Brush, of electric light fame, and Elihu Thomson, whose financial future is now perhaps brighter than that of any of the others, are more than millionaires. Frank J. Sprague was a junior officer in the United States Navy six years ago. He is now living in the mansion which was built for the Grants. His company sold out to the Edison Company for \$1,000,000, and half of it went to the inventor, Franklin L. Pope, of New York, and a score of others have independent fortunes. Most of these men were telegraph operators, and most of them began their experimenting and study without a dollar.

An Interesting Telescope.

A four-inch equatorial telescope for the use of schools and private observers has been introduced by Mr. F. W. Gardam, 58, Ann street, New York, at a cost which will bring it within the reach of many. It is mounted on a handsome tripod of black walnut, and the axes are so carefully ground that the motion is very smooth. A star can be kept in view by a simple movement in right ascension. A balance weight is attached to the declination axis, so that the telescope is perfectly balanced in any position. The instrument is furnished with one erecting and four celestial eye-pieces, giving powers from 75 to 280. The object glass, a compound achromatic lens of four inches aperture and fifty inches focal length, is guaranteed to show all the delicate test objects given in Webb's "Celestial Objects, for Common Telescopes," for example, the solar spots, mountain shadows in the moon, Jupiter's belts and satellites, the crescent of Venus, and so on.

Steam Used for Extinguishing a Fire

Recently a fire broke out in one of the workshops of the Spetz Spinning Mill, at Isenheim, Alsace. The proprietor ordered the use of steam to subdue the fire. The stop valve having been opened, the steam escaped under high pressure, filling the workshop and suffocating the fire. At first the steam, being condensed, saturated with moisture all the combustible objects in the room. More steam being added, the fire was completely extinguished. The smoldering bales of cotton could then easily be washed out with water. Upon close examination it turned out that much less damage had been done to the building, the machinery, and the goods than if water had been used for extinguishing the fire.

A New Use for Aluminum.

According to a Pittsburg dispatch, an order for five hundred tons of aluminum has been placed with the Pittsburgh Reduction Company, to be used for the equipments of the German army. Capt. Hunt, of the Pittsburg company, is reported as saying: "The emperor desires the cannoneers of his soldiers to be made of aluminum. There are two reasons for this, namely: its lightness and cleanliness. It will be used also for buckles, and it may be brought into use in the manufacture of cartridge shells. The new smokeless powder cartridges have brought about a demand for aluminum, and other European powers are also considering the advisability of using it."

Solid Petroleum.

A new method of solidifying petroleum has been demonstrated by Mr. Chanall at the Solidified Petroleum Corporation, Gainsborough Road, Hackney Wick. A quantity of crude petroleum is mixed with 15 percent of certain chemicals, and the vessel containing it is placed in boiling water, then heated in a furnace at a temperature of 40 degrees to 500 degrees Fahr., the mixture being stirred the while. When it is cool the mixture can be pressed into blocks for transport and use as fuel. The process takes half an hour and is inexpensive, and the "briquets" produced burn freely, with only a small percentage of ash.

He Was Helped Twice.

Mrs. Black--Will you have a piece of mince pie, John?

Mr. Black--No, I think not.

"I put some brandy in the mince meat. It helps to--"

"Oh, did you? I'll try a piece please."--Yankee Blade.

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