

Current Topics

THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH CADY STANTON recalls to a writer in the Chicago Inter-Ocean an interesting story of a brief but spirited joint debate between Mrs. Stanton and Horace Greeley. Mrs. Stanton had gone to the office of the New York Tribune to present a petition asking Mr. Greeley to turn his paper over to the cause. After the great editor had listened to Mrs. Stanton for a while he turned, in a self-satisfied way, and asked her what she would do in case of war. Without a moment's hesitation she answered: "I would do as you did, Mr. Greeley. I would send a substitute." Mr. Greeley had nothing more to say, but he ever afterward had the deepest reverence for Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

WALDEMAR BORGORAS OF THE AMERICAN Museum of Natural History recently read a paper before a historical congress in New York city in which he described in detail the traditions and beliefs of the people of the far north. The New York correspondent of the Chicago Inter-Ocean gives an interesting summary of Mr. Borgoras' paper in the following language: "Human souls are like fish or seals to them," he said, reciting this mythology of the primitive peoples; "they come in the night time to human dwellings, put their nets across the entrance, and then begin to poke with long poles under the tent skirts, for the purpose of driving out the souls of the sleepers from the protecting cover of the inner room. However, the spirits themselves are not immune from the attacks of certain magicians among mortals." Mr. Borgoras mentioned among others these tales of the peoples among whom he worked: "The whale skull carrying away a young woman, who afterward is rescued by her brother and returns to her land in a boat pursued by a whale. The man who married a white goose woman and afterward followed her to the land of birds through the opening and shutting rocks. The small old man with transparent arms who stands on the seashore chopping wood with a hatchet and making living fishes of the chips. The aurora borealis is believed to be a special world inhabited by those who die of violence. The red glare is their spilled blood. The changing rays are disembodied souls playing ball with a walrus head. New-born children are believed to be ancestors come back to earth. Their names are found out by asking the suspended divining stone all the names of the preceding generation in turn.

ACCORDING TO MR. BORGORAS THE raven myth is the most important of all. The people of the northern regions believe that the raven is the transformer, but not the creator, of the world. He brings light and fresh water, teaches the human race the ways of earthly life from marriage to the making of nets, and at the same time he is the common laughing stock, is foolish and dirty, and is the perpetrator of many misdeeds and the object of many tricks. He also has the attributes of a real bird and is always hungry. In one tribe the raven is a deity and his mythical name is translated, by older travelers, simply as 'God.' He is connected with almost every tale, and even when it treats of a subject bearing no relation to the raven his name will at least be mentioned at the beginning. He is the transformer of the world, the ancestor of the tribe, and the teacher of various pursuits, who, after making his posterity fit for a self-reliant life, goes away to another country or is turned to stone. Some of the American episodes of the raven tale reappear on Asiatic soil. The raven gives the world its present shape, creates men of stone, and endows them with the power of speech. He breaks the wall of darkness with the aid of other birds and liberates the light. Or else he steals from the house of spirits three skin balls containing the sun, the moon, and the stars. He transforms himself into a small leaf and drops into a pool, and the daughter of a mighty wizard takes the leaf to her house in a bucket filled with water. His wives make him show his tongue, and they bind it with twine, depriving him of the power of speech. He urges the people to flight, under the pretext that the enemy is coming, and then steals all their provisions. He is swallowed by a whale, but afterward kills the whale by pecking at its heart, and comes out. In explaining the similarities between the Asiatic Behring tribes and the North Pacific Indians, we are bound to admit a former juxtaposition of these tribes and a line of direct connection which was in

later times broken apart by the arrival of the Eskimo. We are able to trace the whole extent of this myth and to see that its importance, diminishes along its route from southern Kamchatka to the Columbia river."

EVERY READER OF AMERICAN HISTORY will remember the famous English prison-ship Jersey in which several hundred Americans were martyred during the days of the revolutionary war. The Jersey at that time was stationed in New York harbor and for fifty years a search, more or less regular, has been on foot for the old ship. It was recently discovered in the Brooklyn navy yard lying under twelve or fourteen feet of dirt and water near the water front of the yard. The Brooklyn correspondent of the Chicago Chronicle in describing the discovery of this ship makes the following comment: "The history of the prison-ships and the dramatic story of the men who were imprisoned and who died in them has not been fully preserved. For many years it was all a mystery, and then the skeletons of about 300 men were found in the yard. These were part of the martyrs who had been confined in the ships by the British when they invaded New York, and the tale was partly told. The skeletons were found in the high part of the yard, and the belief has been that the prisoners were shot and then carried to land and buried. The finding of the ship strengthens this theory. The prisoners were probably executed and then the prison-ship set on fire and run aground. The discovery of the skeletons a few years ago is well remembered. Several barrels of bones were gathered up and placed in a vault. Later they were buried in Fort Greene park with an impressive ceremony. The question of whether there are other skeletons in the ruins of the ship is entirely a matter of conjecture."

OF LATE YEARS WOMEN HAVE ENGAGED in many novel occupations, but perhaps not many would have the courage to follow the one chosen by Miss Emily L. Marden of Milwaukee, Wis. This young lady is a full-fledged game-buyer and for this purpose travels extensively through the woods of the northern part of the state. A writer in the Chicago Chronicle tells of this young woman's achievement in this way: "For three months each year she goes from shipping point to shipping point, buying direct from the hunters when she can or from the dealers to whom the hunters bring the game they have killed. This has to be done as rapidly as possible and there is little rest or sleep for the young woman until she has gathered up a sufficient quantity to make it worth while to take the long and tiresome trip back to the city. Under the game laws no shipping is allowed and this means that every time a consignment of game reaches town someone with a hunter's license has brought it down from the north as personal baggage. With Miss Marden this personal baggage is at times excessive and she has brought in at one trip as many as 2,000 birds which she had gathered up in the course of three or four days' travel through the woods."

THE NEWS REPORTS OF NOVEMBER 2 reported the destruction by fire of the old Whittier homestead at Haverhill, Mass. The Chicago Chronicle's description of the accident was as follows: "The house was destroyed, but every relic was saved by a brave and faithful woman, Mrs. J. M. Ela, the matron, who lost her all except the clothing she wore, while she was saving those things that the poet once handled, little things now so dear to his every reader. 'I don't care now that I have saved them,' she said as she guarded them. 'I have nothing left, not another pair of shoes, but his things are safe.' While the fire was raging Mrs. Ela and her niece tore from the walls and about the rooms those things that the poet once owned, his bible, his pictures, his desk and his andirons, on which blazed the inspiring logs in whose flames he saw the visions he has told of in his verses; his fire pan and 100 other things that were a part of his life for half a century. The kitchen is charred, but remains practically intact, and the old chimney, with its big fireplace, stands like a monument amid all the ashes and cinders. The home is the property of the Haverhill Whittier Birthplace association, which organization took it about ten years ago, and has since maintained it. It has been the mecca for thousands from all parts of the country and the most noted landmark in that section of New England.

AN INTERESTING BIT OF NEWS COMES from Vienna and consists of the information that there will shortly be published in that city a newspaper for nervous persons. In this newspaper great catastrophes, bank defalcations and other events calculated to disturb nervous persons will

be treated in a soothing way with due regard to the nerves of its readers. The paper is to be under the direction of a bank director, assisted by two friends who are lawyers, and newspaper men of prominence in Austria and Germany have been invited to send descriptions of recent stirring occurrences treated in this way. Large prizes are offered for the best work.

NEW CURES ARE BEING INVENTED FOR the disease to which flesh is heir, but an heroic method comes from Europe. The Paris correspondent of the Chicago Record-Herald describes the new cure in this way: "M. Raoud Pictet is a famous Swiss savant, chevalier of the Legion of Honor, discoverer of the liquefaction of oxygen, and a member of more than forty scientific societies in France and Germany. He has invented a cure for diseases of the lungs, the stomach, the circulation and the kidneys, entitled 'Frigotherapie,' or the 'Freezing cure.' The necessary machinery consists of a well of metal lined with thick furs, into which the patient descends, the depth being about five feet. This well is surrounded by an outer shell, while the cavity between the outer and inner walls is filled with a combination of sulphurous and carbonic acid, known to the scientific world as 'liqueur Pictet' after its discoverer. This gas is kept at a liquid state at 110 degrees below zero and is constantly forced into the cavity by specially constructed pumps. M. Pictet says the patient, surrounded by furs and the icy liquid, has no impression of cold whatever, and, in fact, his temperature rises after three minutes' treatment, increasing from one-half to one degree in five minutes. A period of treatment ranging from five to fifteen minutes is sufficient for the time being. M. Pictet says he himself, after fifteen years of illness, was cured after eight descents into 'the well.'"

AN INTERESTING REPORT WAS RECENTLY made by the commissioner of the general land office at Washington, wherein it was said that the public land disposed of by the government during the year aggregated 19,488,533 acres, an increase over the previous year. Of this 1,757,793 acres were sold for cash; 17,614,792 acres were embraced in miscellaneous entries, and the remainder were Indian lands.

ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT IT SEEMS that the forest area in the United States is increasing as on October 1, last, there were fifty-four forest reserves, embracing 60,175,765 acres, an increase of almost 14,000,000 acres since the last report. During the fiscal year there were 1,663 forest fires discovered which burned over 87,979 acres. The destructiveness of forest fires is being constantly lessened. Concerning reforestation, the report says: "Assuming that the reforestation of the denuded areas in the forest reserves, where sufficient moisture prevails to make the germination of seeds of the native trees possible, might be expected to result in good time, if the occurrence of devastating fires could be reduced to a minimum, and the grazing of stock restrained within proper limits and reduced to a safe basis, the forest force has been required to make extra exertion to prevent damage by fire, and to keep the office duly informed relative to the effects of stock grazing and to keep out stock not licensed to enter the reserves, and all the evidences point to almost unvarying success. The forest trees are coming back where there is a plentiful rainfall, and not a little hope is found in the fact that the native trees are reproducing themselves in the drier portions of the country, where the fires are kept out and where grazing is restrained within reasonable limits, and many a waste place is becoming a wilderness of verdure."

THE EDUCATION BILL THAT IS CAUSING so much discussion in England and particularly among the public of London and the larger cities is perhaps not so clearly understood by American readers. According to a London correspondent of the Chicago Tribune, the elementary schools of England and Wales are voluntary schools of all religious denominations and board schools. There are in all 14,294 voluntary schools and 5,857 board schools. The correspondent adds: "The voluntary schools are mainly, but not entirely, composed of Church of England schools. They are divisible as follows: Church of England schools, 11,731; Roman Catholic, 1,003; 'British' and miscellaneous, 1,052; Wesleyan, 458. In the voluntary schools there are, in round numbers, 3,200,000 children. In the board schools there are, in round numbers, 2,600,000 children. The 'conscience clause' of the 1870 act makes it compulsory on every school which seeks to obtain a grant for efficiency from the state as a public elementary school to refrain from requiring children to attend church or chapel; and it further requires that any