An Odd Centenarian.

In the year 1816 there died at No. 9 Coldbath square, Cerkenwell, an eccentric lady of the old school—Mrs. Jane Luson—at the reputed age of 116 years, having been a widow for three-score years and ten. Her husband, whose death happened as far back as 1766, when George III. had been little more than five years on the throne, left her in possession of a very fair fortune; and as, in spite of living in a very eccentric style, she was most charitable and liberal, she had the reputation of being very rich—richer, in fact, than she was in reality. Though of a kind and generous disposition, however, she was very self-willed and imperious, and she lived a very isolated and independent existence. Except one or two friends of many years' standing, who were admitted at stated times, she saw no company, but spent her time partly in walking about her garden, partly in reading, and partly in ministering to the wants of a number of cats and other animals that were her pets. She seldom stirred out into the street; and it was remarked that, although nominally a member of the Church of England, it was her practice never to attend a place of worship. Her single servant, Mary, who had grown old in her service, always sat in the same room with her, though at a separate table, and under the strictest injunctions to treat her with as much etiquette as if she were the dame of a rich country squire at the least, and to address her, not as "madam," but as "my lady" or "your ladyship." Her house was furnished in an antique style from top to bottom, and it was full of curious pieces of old china and other articles of vertu.

On evenings this quaint specimen of a former age was always dressed in the most elegant attire, though not in the newest fashion; for she would say that company were coming, or that she expected friends; though, as a matter of fact, it was only with great reluctance that she admitted the most intimate of friends within the door of her apartment. The fact is that she went through all this ceremony in order to assist her memory in recalling those times which she chiefly loved to cultivate, when she was in reality in the habit of attending brilliant assemblies in what was then the West End, surrounded by the votaries of rank and fashion. Action was not wanting to complete the illusion, and to suit the scenery of the drama which she thus represented on her private stage. For a time she would sit down in her chair, musing and meditating, and then begin a conversation with absent persons, answering herself in a feigned voice. Her questions were often addressed, and her formal salutations made to persons once of the first eminence in the world of fashion or politics, but who had long since passed away. And it was strange for those who lived in the nineteenth century to hear her address as if they were present in the flesh the contemporaries of Lord Chesterfield and the elder Pitt. All the famous toasts and beauties of the early days of George III. were thus gathered around her, most of them known only by tradition, of course, to those who were privileged to hear her talk to them. The fact is that in her early youth she and her sister had been stars in the fashionable firmament, and acknowledged leaders of society among persons of "the quality." These imaginary conversations, it is said, often lasted a long time; she would keep up the discussion for an hour or two, and sometimes for an entire evening.

The writer of an account of her which appeared some years since in the *Literary Gazette*, thus describes her from personal knowledge:

"Mrs. Luson was fond of dress, and possessed a large collection of old apparel. One of her favorite dresses had belonged to Cromwell's wife; another to his daughter, Lady Falconberg, being the dress in which that lady had walked at the coronation of James II. Mrs. Luson had also those which Cromwell's daughters wore on a day of particular rejoicing, when the articles of peace were signed between the States of England and Holland in 1655–'56. One of these dresses was valued at nearly 500 guineas. Added to all these were other costly and splendid specimens that comprised her own particular wardrobe; these she often reviewed with particular pleasure, and has been known to boast that they once exceeded in number the days of the year. Many of the most expensive she had not worn for years, but they were regularly once a month or oftener taken out of the large mahogany coffers in which she kept them, aired and carefully inclosed again in flannel wrappers. In the middle of the night she would sometimes call up her servant to give directions about the alteration in a gown or the padding of a pair of stays; her favorite pair had been altered, quilted and padded so often that they were nearly three inches thick, and actually weighed more than a dozen pounds. Over these, in the afternoon put on a single gown; but in the morning she sometimes wore three or four gowns at once. When indisposed (which indeed was not often), she would give orders respecting alterations in some particular dress; and, sitting up in her bed, she would put it on, dress her hair, and ordering the glass to be brought, admire herself for hours in that situation. Her head-gear was in the same style of antiquity as her other habiliments; it was a tete (such as had once been fashionable, and which she never laid aside) formed of dark hair, and nearly sixteen inches high; she wore it regularly powdered, and her friends have affirmed that it became her admirably. She had the greatest antipathy to soap and water, never washing herself, but using a cosmetic, the composition of her mother, from whom she learned to prepare it, and which was composed of the finest mutton suet clarified, with the addition of some emollients and perfumes, the particulars of which were her own secret. As the color of her cheek decayed, she sought to supply its faded bloom with a more injurious composition, using an immoderate quantity of paint, which, destroying her complexion entirely, left her at length a singular spectacle, erasing from the placid dignity of age every line of its venerable beauty.

Mrs. Luson was always an early riser, and during the last few years of her life she got up regularly at 2 o'clock in the morning. If by chance, she happened to lie in bed later than that hour, she would scold herself in the hearing of her maid, saying, "Ah! you've been a very idle girl to-day, that you have!" She kept very large fires burning in her apartments both winter and summer, and some of her fire places were so large that they would consume a bushel and a half of coals a day. Soon after she rose she had her breakfast of tea and between it and dinner time she would have four or five other breakfasts served, partaking moderately at each, and drinking nothing but tea; for during the course of her long life, she partook of coffee only once, and frequently afterward declared that had she drank it for one week together, it would have occasioned her death. As regarded more substantial food, she had a most extraordinary choice of dishes, one of which was sausages and boiled and stewed turnips. On January 30th she always adhered to Mr. Luson's political custom of having a calf's head in ridicule of the royal decapitation; in her case, however, it was nothing more than a cherished memorial of the habits of her deceased husband. She was undoubtedly the last who practiced this long popular custom. She had also other particular dishes on certain days; and in the course of her diurnal repasts she used each room in the house alternately. The entrance doors of her residence were plated with iron and further secured by nearly twenty bars and bolts, so fearful was she of being attacked by thieves—an occurrence which her numerous precautions rendered almost impossible. Mrs. Luson had no family. Whether it was really the cause or effect of her sound health, she never took a dose of medicine or employed a doctor; and when she died she passed away painlessly and gently, apparently suffering from no disease, but simply by the decay of her bodily powers. What became of her property and curious collection of dresses I have never been able to learn.—*N. Y. Tribune.*

A Midnight Battle.

We have a rat story, which, as told by Mr. R. E. Pettingill, clerk of the Municipal Court, is good; and as it is perfectly true, is interesting. It was on last Sunday, very early, that Mr. P. and his amiable wife were aroused from balmy sleep by strange noises. They listened, and ever and anon, thump, thump, would go something. Mr. P. thought of burglars. He proposed to get up, arm himself and go forth. He didn't spend any time dressing himself. He only put on a seven-shooter and a pair of slippers. He went through the parlor, dining room, kitchen, and found nobody, nothing. The noise continued. It could not be a ghost, thought Mr. P. He was not afraid of ghosts, anyway. He went into a store room. The noise, which still continued, seemed to come from an empty flour barrel. The cover was raised. All was still. At the bottom of the barrel there appeared something of a darkish color (the room was dark) and Mr. P. reached down, thinking what he saw was a piece of carpet or a piece of cloth. It was a heap of rats! And when his hand touched them they tore about at a frightful rate. They could not jump high enough to escape. The cover was slapped on and Mr. P. laid away his revolver and put on a pair of thick leather gloves. There he was with gloves and slippers—just in the right trim for rat killing. The bloody tragedy begun by Mr. P. reaching into the barrel, grasping a rat and dashing him to the floor or against the wall. This work continued until four or five of the rodent rebels were dispatched, when those in the barrel, appearing to realize what was going on, made such desperate efforts at leaping and scrambling that seven or eight of them got out, and were on the floor. The door had been closed. There was no chance for escape. A lighted lamp on the shelf proved of great service. Mr. P. had full view of the premises. Unfortunately there was nothing at hand that he could use as a weapon, and he dared not open the door to go forth in search of something. He got down on his knees and went for the ratship, belting them this way and that way with his gloved hands. By and by the rats in great terror sought their hiding places. Up went three or four and hung to his flannel garment. They could not be shook off. The conflict was deepening. Such a tearing about, Mr. P. informs us, cannot be imagined, He was fearful that the entire batch would infest his body. He pounded the door, to give alarm to Mrs. P. She heard the same and appeared on the scene in a moment. What a spectacle was presented to her! But Mrs. P. did not do what most women would do, scream and run away. No; she rallied on the rascals with fire shovel and poker. Mr. P. went to work, and in a short time all the rats lay dead. Mr. Pettingill tells us there were eighteen in all.—*Madison, (Wis.) Democrat.*

RAILROADS IN IOWA.—Iowa has met with the same complete success in giving its railroad commissioners general power to hear and adjust railroad disputes as Massachusetts. In their last annual report the Iowa railroad commissioners say that not one suit at law arising from unjust or discriminating charges has been brought since the commissioner system was adopted, and "the commissioners are not aware of an instance where any railroad company has persisted in charges held to be unjust or discriminative by the board." Nor is the railroad system of Iowa a small one; it has a capital stock of $90,612,451, a bonded debt of $70,343,795, and the year ending June 30 last gross earnings of $21,340,709. The net earnings were $5,310,000, of which 11 per cent was paid in taxes to the State, leaving less than 2 per cent. profit on the total capital and debt, or if the debt charge is met outside of net earnings about 5 per cent. on the capital. The commissioners pronounce in favor of pooling combination among the Eastern trunk lines, as insuring stability, speed and certainty. They are led to this conclusion probably by the exceptional success of the "Iowa pool," which has regulated the rates for nine years to the general satisfaction of all concerned, but has just been broken up by the withdrawal of the Chicago and Northwestern, one of the results apparently of the appearance of the great Wabash combination in Chicago trade with a claim for a share of the business across Iowa.

"He took two drops of thought, and beat them into a bushel of bubbles." was the description given of a speaker whose rhetoric ran ahead of his logic.

The Atheist as a Witness.

In a recent trial in Tennesse the Court refused to receive a certain man's testimony, on the ground that he was an atheist. Some of the religious papers speak approvingly of this decision. Now, we are willing to assent to almost anything that may be said or done against atheists, but we think two opinions may be held regarding the wisdom of the Tennessee judge's ruling.

The object of the Court in calling witnesses is to arrive at a knowledge of facts. Now, is the word of an atheist good for anything as a guide in our search after facts? Is there not more than one atheist who may be believed when he tells us that he has or has not seen Jones this morning? That it did or did not rain yesterday in his region? or even on such a matter as that he will pay his store bill on demand? No, if the word of an atheist may be taken by his neighbor—or even a loan of money may sometimes be safely made on it—may not the Court receive it? The man may not fear Divine judgment for perjury, but, nevertheless, there are certain considerations which have some influence on him to lead to speak the truth. As to a belief in the punishment of perjury after death, there are many witnesses in court whose fears are less regarding that than of the penitentiary, in case they testify falsely.

Grant that a man's credibility is impaired by a lack of belief it a God; his testimony may still be taken for what it is worth. If a witness is very young, if he is underwitted, if he is a man of bad character, if he is strongly prejudiced one way of the other, the jury may not give the weight to his evidence they would otherwise; but still it is listened to. So the testimony of an atheist may be worth something.

As to the suggestion that if ho deos not believe in God he cannot take an oath, the answer is that, like the Quaker, who refuses to take an oath, he can affirm.

In urging the rejection of an atheist's testimony we may be cutting off our own noses. It may be society and not the atheist that is injured. Indeed, others than atheists are generally glad to escape being put in the witness box, but society may suffer if they are excused from testifying. The atheist may be the only person who saw with his own eyes the transactions in question. To reject his testimony may be to let the criminal go free, to send the innocent man to prison, to let the widow be defrauded, to injure not him, but those who believed in a God.

HOW STANTON GOT INTO LINCOLN'S CABINET.—Ward Lamon gives a Washington correspondent this account of the manner in which Lincoln made Stanton Secretary of War: In December, 1861, only a few months after the date of the Stanton letter, recently published in the *North American Review*, Mr. Lincoln was talking with Secretary Chase about the action of our Government in the Trent affair. The President was asking if the Secretary had heard of any opinions as to the Government's course by prominent Democrats, when Mr. Chase said he understood Mr. Stanton, who was then in Washington, shared the opinion of the President and upheld the Government's course. The President then asked Mr. Chase if he had ever heard how Mr. Stanton had abused him (the President) in the McCormick case at Cincinnati. Mr. Chase replied that he had not, and the President told how Mr. Stanton, being retained on the same side as Mr. Lincoln, declined to consult with him, saying he would have nothing to do with the "long-legged and long-armed ape." "But," said the President, as he concluded the story, "tell Mr. Stanton I would like to see him." Within a few evenings Mr. Stanton called at the White House. The President told him he had heard that his visitor was upholding the legality and policy of the Government's course. Mr. Stanton replied at some length, giving his reasons for the opinions he held. The President asked him if he would commit it to writing. Stanton promised he would, and this interview ended without any other subject than the Trent affair being alluded to during the whole of the evening. It was within one or two evenings afterwards that Mr. Stanton called with the MS. of his opinion as requested. As he handed it to the President, the latter said: "Mr. Stanton, there is about to be a change in my cabinet. Will you take the place of Secretary of War?" Mr. Stanton was much surprised, but before he left that evening he had accepted the position, and during the next month, January, 1862, went into the office.

THE LATE ABYSSINIAN PRINCE.—The death of the young Abyssinian Alamayu, at Leeds, is a melancholy termination to a career which even before it came to a close did not lack pathetic interest. The son of the late King Theodore was not a possible successor for his father, and he thus became, as it were, a ward of his father's conquerors. This involved the same difficulty which has so often presented itself in similar case. Almayu could not be left in his native country, where he would not only have been without the advantages of education, which could only be given to him in England. He was accordingly brought to England, and there he has suffered the same fate as that which has been undergone by so many strangers to our climate before him. The change from the happy valleys of Abyssinia, even though these happy valleys may lack some of the delights once attributed to them, to the chill and bleak air of England, has once more been too much for a native of summer lands. Prince Alamayu was only 19 when he died, and he was well spoken of for moral and interlectual qualities. Had he lived, it is doubtful what career might have opened itself to him. But the ill-luck of his house pursued him, and he has fallen a victim to it.—[London News, November 15 th.

There is still living in Fulton county, Ga., an old man named Gregg, who enjoys the distinction of having guarded the Great Napoleon during his captivity on board the Bellerophon previous to his departure for St. Helena. Mr. Gregg, who is now eighty-five years of age, was one of the British marines on the Bellerophon, and it was his duty to guard the cabin door of the illustrious prisoner and prevent intrusion.

FINANCE AND COMMERCE.

Financial.

MONDAY EVENING, Dec. 29.

NEW YORK, Dec. 29.—Silver bullion 13⅜; U. S. Bonds—5s, 3½; 4½s, 6½; 4s, 4. Closed at same.

LONDON, Dec. 29.—Consols 97 9-16@97⅝.

U. S. Bonds—5s, 6½; 4½s, 9⅝; 4s, 6½.

SAN FRANCISCO PRODUCE MARKET

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 29.

Wheat—Firm—shipping $2@$2 05.
Flour—Weak.
Oats—Dull.
Potatoes—Dull.
Grain Bags—Strong.
Wool—Firm.

LIVERPOOL WHEAT MARKET.

LIVERPOOL, Dec. 29.

Wheat—Spot, firm.

Beerbohm English Wheat Report.

LONDON, Dec. 27.

Floating cargoes of wheat strong.
Good cargoes of red winter wheat off coast per 480 lbs less usual commission, 57s 6d.
Wheat arrivals off coast for orders small.
Liverpool spot wheat steady.
No. 1 standard, 12s; No. 2 standard, 11s 7d; red winter, 11s 7d; white Michigan, 11s 7d; red American, spring, No. 3 to 2, 9s 7d@10s 11d.

Gold and Stock Company's Reports.

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 27.

Receipts during the past 24 hours—8000 qr sks flour; 19,500 ctls wheat; 14,500 doz eggs; 4000 sks potatoes; 250 ctls oats.

Charters—Br sh Cape Clear, for Havre, at £3 7s 6d; Br sh Kavilah, for Havre, at £3 10s; Br sh Forfarshire, previously reported, gets £3, to Cork, U. K.

Registered tonnage in port engaged for cargoes, 35,000; miscellaneous, 5,750; disengaged, 15,000; on way, 150,000. Last year, respectively, 22,000, 8000, 75,000, 85,000.

Wheat—Quiet, but firm.
Barley—Dull and weak.
Corn—Nominal.
Flour—Dull and weak.
Eggs—Easier.
Butter—Firmer.

Hides—Dry, over 16 lbs, and kip and calf, 21c Wet salted, light to medium, 9c; heavy, 10c; kip, 9c; calf, 10@12½c, all active and firmer.

Pelts—Long to short wool, $1 25@2 50; steady.
Tallow—Easy at 5½@6c.

Apples—Choice Oregon Spitzbergen, $1 is extreme for extra high color; Lady, choice to extra choice, $2@2 50; common mixed lots, 50c as to quality; Baldwin, 90c@$1 for extra choice Oregon.

Lemons—Cal., $25@30.
Limes—Cal., $1 50@4.

CHICAGO MARKETS.

CHICAGO, Dec. 27.

Short ribs—$6 85.
Pork—$13 82½ paid for January.
Lard—$7 75 paid for February.
Wheat—None.

NEW YORK MARKETS.

NEW YORK, Dec. 27.

Wheat—Strong.
Flour and Wool—Steady.
Grain Bags—Firm.