

The First Locomotive and Passenger-Car.

Stephenson had been called a lunatic when he had said that his locomotive could run twelve miles an hour. One very distinguished officer of the English Government, whose duty it was to see that the mails were carried as quickly as possible, laughed at the idea, and said that if ever a locomotive ran ten miles an hour with a mail-behind it, he would eat a steamed engine-wheel for his breakfast.

There was some little excuse for this disbelief, for the first locomotive was a very clumsy machine. It was called the "Locomotion." Stephenson, when he built it, was the only man besides his son who believed it would go at all; and some of the learned members of the English Parliament declared that it could not run against a strong wind! It was a most clumsy affair, weighing not more than one-fifth as much as an engine of the present time.

The first improvement in it—the "Rocket"—was even more ridiculous in appearance; but it was found to be faster and stronger. Before it was accepted by the railroad company, it was put in a race with three other engines manufactured by other engineers; and of the judges and thousands of persons who witnessed the race, "nine-tenths were against the 'Rocket' because of its appearance." But Stephenson received the prize over the other competitors, one of whom was Captain John Ericsson. His locomotive could run fifteen miles an hour, and once actually drew thirteen tons at the speed of twenty miles an hour. That performance decided the fate of locomotives, and engineers at once set to work to improve the new motive power.

The first railroad passenger-car was simply an old box on wheels, with seats running along the sides, a door at the rear end, and a seat in front for the driver, like the box of an omnibus. It was called the "Experiment," because it was generally believed that people would travel on the railway. In 1825, about the time the first line was finished, one of the principal papers of England said that nothing could be "more ridiculous than the prospect of locomotives traveling twice as fast as stage-coaches." And it added that people would as soon "suffer themselves to be fired off upon one of Congress's rockets as trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine going at such a rate."

Stephenson, however, firm in his belief that passengers would travel by rail, declared that the time would come, and he hoped to live to see it, when it would be cheaper for a poor man to ride than to walk. This prophecy threatens to be more than fulfilled in a few years. It is proposed in England to send passengers by rail at ordinary English letter-rates, and under a special tariff made up of postage-stamps—a six-cent stamp entitling the holder to go by any route to any part of Great Britain. But George Stephenson was not believed then, and the people continued to call him "Dad" "Geordy," which means "Crazy George." It was not long after the Stockton and Darlington road was opened that more passenger-cars were needed. The first improvement on the "Experiment" was a double car, made out of two "mourning-coaches." This car was lighted at night by a single candle.—St. Nicholas for December.

The Opossum.

With the general proportions of (but a longer nose than) the common rat, almost the size of a domestic cat, it presents a rather disagreeable appearance and odor. A dense coat of light-gray wool, with scattered long hair interspersed, covers the body, while the short ears, the eyes, the long pointed nose, the feet and tail are colored quite dark. The strong, round, slender tail is destitute of hair, but covered, like the beaver's, with scales. But the most peculiar feature of this animal is the mammary pocket, or marsupium, formed by a folding in of the skin on the abdomen. Its character is marked by wonderful cunning and stupidity combined. The daytime it spends in slothful idleness, but prowls about nocturnally seeking for food. Walking or slowly ambling at an awkward gait, it proceeds from place to place, usually following the borders of streams and ponds, and reaching where the water is shallow. But its limbs seem best adapted to climbing; the plantigrade, hand-like feet, with thumbs opposable to the fingers, and the long, prehensile tail, strongly indicate scorial habits and arboreal life. Among the trees which it inhabits it climbs by its tail, and manifests astonishing agility, climbing or swinging from branch to branch with perfect safety, and may be seen hanging by one or more of its feet, or by its tail alone, while busily engaged in gathering and eating the wild-grapes, or haw, or persimmon, of which it is particularly fond, or robbing birds' nests of their eggs or young. A varied diet suits its omnivorous appetite, and it fares promiscuously on fruits, vegetables, eggs, insects, worms, reptiles, small quadrupeds and birds, often stealing domestic fowls. It commonly hides among vines and branches, in holes or trees or logs, or in holes in the ground. In these places also its nests of grass and leaves are found. In autumn the opossums become excessively fat, and are then prized for food in the Southern States, especially by the negroes, who sometimes hunt them and eat their flesh. It has already exterminated them from many localities where they abounded before. Their flesh, when cooked, resembles roast-pig.

Weekly List of Patents issued to Pacific Coast Inventors. Reported by C. W. M. SMITH, Patent Lawyer, 415 Montgomery Street, San Francisco.

- Harvester—Jean Pierre Deloiseaux, Mirabe, Cal.
Biscuit Cutter—Alexander P. Ashbourne, Oakland, Cal.
Chair Fastening—Lee D. Craig, S. F., Cal.
Pipe Joint—Byron Jennings, San Jose, Cal.
Sulky Plow—George Moor, Lafayette, Oregon.
Aat Extremator—Michael Barthel, Milpitas, Cal.
Ice Machine—John M. Beath, S. F., Cal.
Process for Treating Ores—Henry H. Eames, Oakland, Cal., and Abel Patchen, S. F., Cal.
Photographic Background—Isiah W. Taber and Thomas H. Boyd, S. F., Cal.
Tappet Clamp for Stamp Stems—N. J. Colman, S. F., Cal.
Camp Plow—Frank A. Hill, San Leandro, Cal.
Concentrator—Francis E. Mills, Virginia, Nevada.
Watch Case Spring—Ansel S. Bucklelew, Colma, Cal.
Photographic Telegraphs—John O. Ludwick, S. F., Cal.
Flamingo Digger—Wm. P. Martyn, S. F., Cal.

French and American Women.

Albert Rhodes in his book, "The French at Home," says: "The face of the American woman is more beautiful than that of any other country. It has delicacy of coloring and feature, and fineness and intellectuality in expression; but the body supporting the head, regarded from an artistic and hygienic point of view, is inferior. For breathing and digesting, the upper part is lacking in depth. In a word, the American is more fragile; she is hardly a Diana, and the French is something more, although not the Hebe of Rubens. The American has more intellect than the French sister, but the latter has softness where she has pertness. There is nervous excitability and cleverness in her, mellowness and quality of character in the other. The forced, brilliant vitality of woman in America is subject to fits of reaction, for nature has its limit. In the French woman the mind is more active and cheerful, and in the absence of exhaustive and irregular demands made upon it the uniform health is better. In qualities of purely mental character, the equal of the American woman cannot perhaps be found in the world; but with all her knowledge and intellectual activity, she lacks that which made the Greek what they have been, and the French what they are—organic cultivation. Entwined in these words are taste and art. A ripper civilization, though not a purer, shall invest her with a knowledge of these things, and a hereditary character now possessed, and with it will come, alas! that decadence in morals which always marches on in every climate. It is sad that such heavy tribute should be exacted as the price of an added enjoyment, but art is inexorable.

Vaults of the Inquisition at Rome.

The inquisition at Rome has recently been thrown open to the public, and are engaged in digging into the vaults beneath. The correspondent of a London paper went down a flight of steps, which had just been cleared of old rubbish, and where the workmen were laying bare a series of dungeons beneath the vaults. In one place he saw five skeletons of people who had been walled up in masonry over a century and a half ago, but the most suggestive and terrible discovery was a vault full of skulls, and scattered human remains. From this vault there was a shaft about four feet square, ascending perpendicularly to the first floor of the building, and ending in a passage off the hall of the chancery, where a trap door lay between the tribunal and the way into a suite of rooms destined for one of the officials. The object of this shaft could admit of one surmise. The ground of the vault was made up of decayed animal matter, a lump of which he imbedded in a long silken lock of hair, as he found by personal examination as it was shoveled up from below. But that was not all; there were two large subterranean vaults, shaped like a beehive in masonry, filled with layers of calcined bones, forming the substratum lying directly beneath two other chambers on the ground floor in the immediate vicinity of the very mysterious shaft above mentioned.

A Scene in Cairo.

As we sit in our hotel windows awaiting the moment of departure, we enjoy a last tableau of Cairo. A long train of camels files by, each one attached to the tail of the one preceding. They march on erect beneath the large building stones which they are laden. They look innocent and sweet; yet they are said to bristle with rage if provoked beyond measure. These have hardly passed when there follows a wedding procession. At the head pipes a piper upon a reed, which squeaks mightily; then two drummers supply with great volume what the reed lacks in contrast. Now follow long lines of Arabs arm in arm across the highway; then the bridegroom, bestriding a donkey. Through kiss his hands, and prophecy happiness. Now follow women; thickly veiled walks the bride between two bridesmaids who support her, and seem to address her with much gesticulation, as if to tease her; but perhaps they are giving her lessons in marital matters. Four gayly decked boys bear a canopy over her head, and she moves with the air of a stage-queen. Behind these with much talking and shouting comes the rabble; and the vile little donkey-boys, congregating in numbers before the hotel, when not besieging some easy-going excursionist, take part in the merry procession by pushing the bridegroom with the blunt of the beating with gentleness, but appear not to relish the fun.—Scribner for December.

How a Cricket Saved a Ship.

In Southern "History of Brazil" he tells how Cabeza de Vaca was in a great ship going to South America with four hundred men and thirty horses; and after they had crossed the equator, the commander discovered that there were only three casks of water left. He gave orders to make the nearest land, and for three days sailed by the coast. A poor, sick soldier, who had left Cadiz with them brought a grillo, or ground cricket, with him, thinking its cheerful voice would amuse him on the long, dreary voyage, but to his great disappointment, the little insect was perfectly silent the whole way. The fourth morning after the ship had changed her course, the cricket, who knew what she was about, set up her shrill note. The soldier at once gave warning to the officers in charge of the vessel, and she soon saw high, jagged rocks just ahead of them. The watch had been careless, and the great ship, in a few moments would have been dashed to pieces on the ledges, if this puny creature had not scented the land and told them of their danger. Then they cruised along for some days, and the cricket sang for them every night, just as cheerily as if she had been in far-off Spain, till they got to their destined port, the island of Catalina.—Selected.

A Good Answer.

The conductor on the train which reached Clinton, Ind. from the West, recently, was so kind to an old lady when she got off the train at De Witt, and he rendered her so much assistance in getting her baggage to the depot, that a passenger asked him if the old lady was his mother, "O, no," was the reply, "but she is somebody's mother." This is the conduct of a true gentleman, and is in strange contrast with that of the shoddy aristocracy which has grown up within the last few years.

Andersen's Childhood.

Hans Christian Andersen was born in the city of Odense, on the island of Funen, April 2d, 1805, and he died in Copenhagen, August 4th, 1875. His father was a poor shoemaker, and lived with his wife and child in a small room, which had to serve them as parlor, bedroom, nursery, and kitchen. The bed in which the whole family slept, the shoemaker had himself made out of the catafalque of a deceased nobleman, and the funeral trappings of black cloth, which the father no doubt thought very ornamental, were still attached to the frame. While Hans Christian was a child, he would much prefer to be a prince or a noble, or perhaps a king, who could wear fine gold-embroidered clothes and ride in a gilt carriage of his own, drawn by six beautiful horses. But as there was little prospect of his being made king in any ordinary way, he thought of all sorts of amusements, and he thought of a story which he took such pleasure in his theatre, because there he could make himself king or general, or even emperor, and in fact anything he chose, and even believe in it himself for the moment. Indeed, there was nothing too incredible for him to believe. One day he saw a big man, an old woman who washed clothes told him that the emperors of China was sitting under the river of Odense. "And," says Andersen in "The Story of My Life," "I did not find it at all impossible that a Chinese prince, some moonlight night when I was a child, might sail up the river through the earth up to us, bear me along, and then take me with him to his kingdom, make me rich and noble, and finally let me visit Odense, where I would live and build me a castle. Many an evening did I occupy myself with tracing and drawing the great emperor, and when Andersen was only five or six years old he lost his father, and his mother had to take in washing to support herself and her son. Like many other poor children, he was sent to a factory where he was to work; but the laborers there teased and mistreated him, and as he was not a brave boy, he ran home to his mother and said that he would never go back again; and his mother petted him, and yielded to his wish. In school he hardly cared much better; the schoolmistress, who sat with a long rod in her hand, was very kind to him, and he opened to him, and again he ran away, and, as usual, his mother indulged him. In the house of an old lady, Mrs. Bukked, he now got hold of a translation of Shakespeare, and immediately began to write a tragedy of his own, in which everybody killed himself or was killed by somebody else.

Our Colonial and Revolutionary Flags.

In the beginning of the Revolution a variety of flags were displayed in the revolted colonies. The "Union flags," mentioned so frequently in the newspapers of 1774, were the ordinary English red ensigns, bearing the Union Jack. These generally bore some patriotic motto, such as "Liberty," "Liberty and Property," "Liberty and Union," &c. It is not known what flag, if any, was used by the Americans at Bunker Hill. That displayed by Putnam on Prospect Hill, on July 18th following, was red, with *Qui transtulit sustinet* on one side, and on the other, "An Appeal to Heaven." The first armed vessel commissioned by Washington sailed under the pine-tree flag, a white flag bearing a green pine-tree. The first republican flag unfurled in the Southern States, blue with a white crescent in the upper corner near the staff, was designed by John White in Monticello, bearing the device of a rattlesnake in the attitude of striking, with the motto, "Don't Tread on Me." The official origin of the "Grand Union" flag is involved in obscurity. At the time of its adoption at Cambridge, the colonies still acknowledged the legal rights of the mother-country, and therefore retained the blended ensigns of St. George and St. Andrew, changing only the field of the old ensign for the thirteen stripes, emblematic of their union. After the declaration of independence, the emblems of British union became inappropriate, but they were retained in the flag until the following year. Congress solved, on June 14th, 1777, "that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."—Appleton's American Encyclopedia, revised edition.

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