

LAND OF OPALS.

Searching for the Jewels in the Mountains of Faroe.

We climbed the mountain in a blinding mist, our faces beaded with fog drops, testifying to the fact. Once on the summit, it was time to begin our search, and in grim sincerity we fell under the sway of jewel fever.

On our hands and knees we groped excitedly over the boulders, pulling away the moss, heather and soil to seek those splints in the porphyry indicative of the latent existence of the stones, the most energetic parts of which were thus bursting toward the light. And, thanks to the knowledge of our guide, we were soon upon the track of some promising stones. Between the boulders, where the down-flow of accumulated rains had carried the earth, we espied a number of ruby particles. Digging, we discovered larger fragments, and later, having followed the course of these minute bits, we arrived at the block itself, which, by disintegration, was enriching the lower soil. Here, then, the hammer and chisel came prominently into use.

Tons upon tons of the native porphyry in this locality were specked with opaline substances and tiny jewels of very engaging colors—rich chert, clear yellow and red brown, flesh, milk white and grey. It seemed to my ignorant eyes that we were destined inevitably to release just as many stones as we pleased. But, alas! Hope after hope was crushed when the hammer and chisel were brought into play. In the first place the matrix was terribly hard, and secondly when it did yield to Johanneson's steady blows, the stones embedded in it, and which had formerly looked so fine, were with it shattered all to pieces. Or when, by good luck, they came out unblemished, they proved of no depth, opaque, and therefore valueless—mere "laminae."

Eventually, after four or five hours' incessant labor, digging and hammering, bathed in the eternal fog all the time, we filled our pockets with jewels in better or worse condition, and for the most part envied with a lump of the hard porphyry matrix. The bonder said it was no bad day's work. But when, that evening, we submitted all our treasures to the criticism of an expert who lived in the valley, he shook his head and pronounced sentence: "No good! No good, that is, as jewels; no jewel would buy the stones for setting. On the other hand as mere specimens, pretty and suggestive, they were very good, and with this we were obliged to be content, though for our further discomfiture, our guide told us that the dwellers in the valley often secured many valuable stones with apparent ease.

Believed Fire by Friction a Myth.

On Barrard Inlet, in British Columbia, dwells a logging-camp boss, known far and wide by the name of Lev. He is a hunter of some importance, and a rifle-shot of more than ordinary skill. One rainy day Lev took his gun and sallied forth for a deer-hunt, but was overtaken by darkness while a long way from the camp and forced to remain in the woods all night. On searching his pockets he found he was without matches. The logging crew blew horns, fired guns, etc., to guide him home, but without avail. Morning returned, and Lev made his way home just as the crew were turning out for breakfast. Hungry, wet and tired, he sat down in front of the big camp-fire, rested his face on his hands, his hands on his knees, looked vacantly at the blaze, and for about ten minutes appeared lost in contemplation. He then spoke: "Boys, did you ever hear of a person making a fire by rubbing two sticks together?" "Oh, yes," replied several; "easy enough to do. Common thing," etc. Lev waited patiently till they all got through, and then exclaimed: "It may be easy enough to do, and, perhaps, has been done, but I'll be eaten alive if anybody ever did it in one night."—*Argonaut.*

Piercing Children's Ears.

"You would be surprised if you could see the number of mothers who come here to have the ears of their female infants pierced," said a Gratiot avenue jeweler, as he pinched the soft, pink lobe attached to the head of a good-looking young woman. "I cannot understand why a mother should want her three or four-year-old babe subjected to such a practice, which is of itself barbarous, but it is no use refusing them, so I perforate their articular organs for twenty-five cents a pair. The age of sixteen is as early as a girl should wear ear ornaments.

"Is the operation painful? To grown persons, yes. But in cases of infants, by rolling the lobe upon the ball of my thumb with my index-finger I drive all the blood to the top of the ear and reduce the pain to a minimum. I notice one peculiarity that I cannot explain, and that is that in piercing the right ear the subject always experiences more or less pain, while the puncturing of the left ear is attended by little, if any, painful effects."—*Detroit Tribune.*

A Cruel Ox-Driver's Boomerang.

An ox-driver named Samuel Poorman became enraged, at Lima, Ohio, because his team could not pull the load he had piled on his wagon, and beat the oxen in a cruel manner. Finally he tied a large knot in the end of his whiplash and declared he would knock the animals' eyes out. Poorman swung the lash high in the air and brought it down with all his power, but his aim was poor. He missed the brutes, but struck his own head, and the knot was buried in his right eye, completely destroying it.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

TWENTY million five hundred thousand dollars have been already raised for the New York aqueduct. Originally the work was to have cost about half the sum already raised.

LIEUTENANT SCHWATKA, the Arctic explorer, has been lecturing in Iowa on his arctic experience. He says that he expects to make an expedition into the mountains of Northern and Western Mexico in the spring.

SILAS S. COBB, a Chicago Street railway magnate, played a little Santa Claus business himself on last Christmas. Mr. Cobb sent a check for \$1,000 to each one of his nieces. To some men this would not mean much, but as Mr. Cobb is the uncle of thirty-two separate and distinct nieces, his little experience as Santa Claus cost him the snug sum of \$32,000.

EIGHTEEN States in the Union have adopted scientific temperance education laws, and Congress has passed a law which insures the instruction of youth in principles of temperance in the schools of the Territories, the District of Columbia, and the military and naval schools. These results are due to the efforts of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which devotes much energy, time, and money to the work.

THE Rev. Madison C. Peters has been reviewing New York's immorality. He says that drunkenness among the women in New York is vastly on the increase, and that women who acquire the alcohol habit seldom reform. "In New York city in ten years, of 133,000 persons arrested for intoxication, 66,000 were women. Multitudes of women drink, and it is no unusual thing to see acknowledged ladies at balls, dinners, and at fashionable restaurants so overpowered by an old-fashioned drunk that they can hardly sit up."

THE International Labor Congress, to be held in Paris next August, during the Universal Exposition, was originally called by the Paris Conference of 1886, at which England, Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, Sweden and Australia were represented. The Congress was endorsed at the London conference of last November. A programme of action is now being arranged in Paris, and labor organizations in all parts of the world are invited to send delegates. A number of American bodies will be represented in the Congress.

THE iron industries are confronted by the evident fact that railroad construction in 1889 will be small as compared with that of the two last years. Judging from current accounts, last year was not so favorable for the iron and steel makers, though this may be taken with some allowance. How far the natural demand of the country will provide a market for the output of iron, or to what extent the building of short branch lines will make a market for steel rails, are questions on the solution of which the prosperity of these departments depends.

A WYOMING jury has found a verdict in favor of a territorial pioneer who sold an Eastern capitalist a ranch and a bunch of cattle said to number 2,500, only 1,300 of which could be found on the ranch. The verdict indorses the "book account" system of determining the number of cattle on a range without tallying. The defense was that the hard winter accounted for the loss of the missing cattle. This book account system has been accountable for the failure of a great many Eastern and foreign capitalists and syndicates who have invested in Western cattle ranches.

FOR some time past certain ladies throughout the country have been interested in plans looking to the organization of a National committee of women, who shall collect funds for the purpose of having a superb portrait of Mrs. Cleveland painted for the White House. For several reasons it has been thought well to put her portrait beside those now in the executive mansion, and the informal plans are to have a full length picture taken in her bridal dress. Women of both political parties are to be asked to assist in securing this portrait, which is to be done by a prominent painter, and be framed in a gorgeous frame befitting the gem it will contain.

SHIPBUILDING in Maine, which has dragged along at a dull pace for several years past, has finally taken a boom, and the maritime populace is happy. The freight market has steadily improved for a year past, not only in the coastwise trade, but in deep-water business, and new construction has received a great impetus. The record of 1888 in the shipyards of Maine, although it will be far surpassed by that of the coming year, is no mean showing, as will be seen from the appended summary of the new vessels launched in the various districts: Eighteen schooners, one bark, one steam bark, two steam yachts, one steamboat, and one steam tug—twenty-four vessels; total tonnage, 10,085.83.

THERE are many persons in New York city who carry their belief in the preternatural gifts of the medical profession to a degree that is almost incredible. A famous oculist told a *Star* writer the other day that he frequently has callers who want the color of their eyes changed. They are chiefly foolish young women whose eyes are not of a becoming hue. One lady, who ought to have known better, wanted her eyes recolored to match an elaborate evening toilet she intended to wear at a fashionable reception. When he explains to them, as he always does, the utter hopelessness of such a request, they gener-

ally discredit his statements, and go away with the firm belief that he is an arrant impostor.

A NEAR relative of President-elect Harrison gives the following account of how the latter got into possession of the historic gold medal voted to Major-General Wm. Henry Harrison by Congress in recognition of his victory over the British at the battle of the Thames: The medal was in possession of Scott Harrison, father of the President-elect, and at the outbreak of the civil war he made the agreement with his three sons, who had enlisted in the army, that whoever would first earn the title of Major-General should be rewarded with the gift of the precious heirloom. There were three sons—Irwin, Bassett and Ben. Irwin was promoted to be a Colonel, Bassett reached the rank of Captain, but only Ben reached the Major-Generalship. And so Ben was rewarded.

THE metropolis is called the "city of magnificent distances," it contains a vast amount of wealth and at the same time contains a vast amount of wretchedness and poverty. Among its gorgeous residences and magnificent institutions it has what is called "A Winter's Night Lodging House," where an unfortunate and friendless traveler may find shelter and temporary rest. No drunken person or chronic pauper or one vermin-ridden is admitted. It is rather designed for extraordinary cases of the benighted and homeless poor. It is stated that on the night before last Christmas there stood shivering before the door of this house a long line of homeless ones, asking admission. Seventy-eight homeless ones slept in that house on that night. Some had seen better days, some were victims of injustice and wrong, all were unfortunate, poor and homeless.

THE Castle Garden (New York) report shows that the immigration of last year from the kingdom of Sweden and Norway was over 7,000 greater than that from Ireland. It ran as high as 61,649. The great mass of the Swedes and Norwegians, as soon as they landed here, struck out for the West, a large proportion of them going as far as Dakota, which within recent years has become a favorite region of settlement for them. It is their desire to procure land for cultivation, and they like to settle closely together, but they quickly become Americanized. Wisconsin, Kansas and Minnesota used to be their chosen States, but the price of farms there is now too high for them. The small population of their native kingdom has suffered a very heavy depletion during the last quarter of a century by the constant outflow to the United States, and there have been many projects for retaining the people at home, but all efforts to do so are nullified by the letters sent there by the immigrants, who have secured prosperity in this country.

THE recommendations made to the Treasury Department by Behring Sea customs officials for the establishment of permanent life-saving stations at Point Barrow and Cape Lisburne deserve careful consideration. Every season, says the *New York Tribune*, more than 1,500 American seamen are exposed to the perils of treacherous Arctic fogs in the whale fisheries off Herald Island. Last summer fifteen or more vessels were caught in the ice early in September and narrowly escaped the horrors of the Jannette's northwest passage. If there were a permanent station in Northern Alaska, supplied every season with provisions and relays of men, many lives would be saved. Several rescues of shipwrecked crews were effected during the seasons when Point Barrow was occupied by one of the international companies of meteorological observers. Last year Captain Hanley of the Revenue Marine Service, succeeded in delivering 160 seamen from imminent peril in those waters. There is work of this nature to be done every year in that quarter. Congress should enable the Department to establish at least two life-saving stations on the northernmost shores of the United States.

Gov. SWINEFORD, of Alaska, says the *Boston Advertiser*, has been unmercifully ridiculed for predicting that the mammoth, alive and well, will ere long be found in the interior of the vast, unexplored peninsula of which he is the territorial executive. There have recently been published two or three stories, apparently independent of each other in their origin, which his excellency can not fail to find very consoling to his wounded sensibilities. These stories are told, it is said, by natives who penetrated far from the coasts on hunting expeditions, and who claim to have seen huge animals "as big as the white man's house" devouring the herbage along the banks of an inland river. Descriptions of the strange monsters are given, and, although the language is crude and the narrators admit that they themselves were too frightened to make very close examinations, it must be said that the beasts are either mammoth or humbug. Most people, except Governor Swineford, laugh at such stories. At Sitka these remarkable revelations are commonly explained on the ground that the natives had been looking through glasses filled with a kind of strong drink peculiar to the Aleutian islands. But give the governor a chance. He may yet bring home a mammoth.

ACCORDING to the *New York Times*, "Oleomargarine, lard, and other nefarious adulterations have spoiled our trade in cheese. It has been notorious for some years past that good cheese was exceedingly difficult to procure in the United States, and that it has constantly lost ground in the English market because of its inferior quality. And while we have been falling into a demoralized condition, the Canadians have beaten us by manufacturing the best possible quality and by refraining from the use of adulterants. The result is a matter

of course. It may not be unsatisfactory in one way to American dairymen, who possibly make more money by making poor cheese, but it is unsatisfactory from a moral point of view, which should never be lost sight of in the eager pursuit of lucre. The difference in the butter market is beyond question due to some extent to the large trade done in oleo oil, of which 300,460 hundredweight was sent abroad in 1888, against about half as much in 1880. Another reason, which is more satisfactory, is that American butter has so much improved in quality of late years, since the extension of creameries and the use of improved methods in private dairies, that it is too good for the foreign markets, which demand butter of cheap grades."

FRANK G. CARPENTER says in one of his interesting letters that there are but "few rich Japanese." The rule here is that the people are not accumulative in our sense of the word. They have never learned the philosophy of investment, and they spend all they make. They have in the past had no chance for the investment of money except in lands and the saving done has been largely for rebuilding their houses in cases of fires, which are very frequent. Dr. Hepburn, who has been in Japan for more than thirty years, is my authority for the statement that a Japanese house is thought on the average to last only five years before it is destroyed by fires. The framework and interiors are like tinder, and whole villages are swallowed up almost monthly in Japanese conflagrations. The people are the most careless people in regard to fires I ever seen, and there are no fire departments to speak of out of the four or five large cities. This danger has thus been an incentive to saving, but above this there is little. Seven-tenths of the people at a rough estimate live from hand to mouth, though the postal savings banks which have been introduced bid fair to teach them differently. Interest is high and the banks make money. There is not a large government debt, and the most of the debt is held at home."

Financial Methods of To-day.

IT is fair to say that no young people understand the difficulties in which the Americans of the first half of the century lived and worked from the variation of currency in the different States. Very often a bill of an Illinois bank would not circulate in New England. You had to take it to a broker, and pay perhaps ten per cent. of its value in exchange for bills which would circulate. This difficulty was removed when, in the first year of the civil war, Mr. Chase, with the authority of Congress, introduced a National bank system. Nobody cares now whether his greenback is issued in Illinois or in Oregon or in New York. What young readers may not have noticed is that bank bills are much less used than they were of necessity in those days, and indeed that a paper currency of trade is less handled than it was then. The change comes from the telegraph. And the illustration, which I take from the experience of our own States, applies precisely to the commerce of the world.

If a traveler went from Boston to Illinois in the year 1835, perhaps to buy wool in Ohio, in Indiana or Illinois, he would have taken, perhaps, a belt containing silver dollars to the full amount which he wanted to use. Perhaps he would take New England bank bills. The New England banks had invented a system of mutual exchange which gave their bills a somewhat national reputation. If he could get them he would take the bills of the United States Bank in Philadelphia. But this bank and all other banks in the country failed in the year 1837. For some time, then, it was a most difficult thing to remit money or a value from one part of the nation to another. Indeed, that difficulty alone showed that it was not yet a "nation." You can imagine the anxiety, the real danger and the difficulty connected with carrying so much money, which could be stolen at any time of day or night.

All of this is now changed. Let a purchaser travel North, South, East or West, if he takes fifty dollars with him he is simply provided for a journey of whatever length or for purchases however large. He has simply to carry with him some letters by which, in any large town in the country, he may identify himself. Suppose he arrives at Duluth and makes a purchase; he wishes to pay at once; he goes to some banker in Duluth and gives his name, and shows a letter of introduction from a banker in Boston; this letter has on it his own autograph; if he is an entire stranger he verifies himself by reproducing this autograph for the Duluth banker. He offers to the Duluth banker his own check on a Boston bank. The Duluth man then asks the Boston bank if this check is "good"—that is, whether they will honor it. They say that it is, and the traveler has his money. If they say it is not he is arrested for fraud and sent to prison. What the telegraph gives is the opportunity to any man to travel or to do business with as little actual money as he needs for personal purposes from day to day.—*New York Graphic.*

A MATTER OF TASTE.

A lady, a day or two ago, went into a store where they are selling books wonderfully cheap, and, approaching a counter over which a charming young saleswoman presided, asked: "Have you got 'John Halifax'?" "No," was the saleswoman's reply, "we're just out of 'John Halifax,' but here is 'John Nicholson,'—will that do?" The lady thought it would not do. But the little saleswoman was determined to effect a sale. So she went on: "Do you like deep books, ma'am? Here's 'Ten Thousand Leagues Under the Sea'—that's a very deep novel."—*Pittsburg Dispatch.*

BEFORE PETERSBURG.

Remarkable Displays of Personal Courage in the Civil War.

The fight before Petersburg, writes General Horatio C. King, brought out several remarkable displays of personal courage. Two armies confronted each other with sullen and determined bravery. On Burnside's front the Confederate lines were less than 150 yards distant. A stone might be thrown from the Union parapet into the rebel earthwork. For nearly a month 400 patriotic moles had been burrowing in the ground, carrying out the earth in cracker boxes, concealing it from the enemy's view with underbrush and steadily undermining the fort of the unsuspecting foe. Night and day the work goes on, and all hearts are centered on the project if successful will insure the capture of Petersburg and, in all probability, the fall of Richmond. The evening of July 29 is at hand, and under the doomed fort 8,000 pounds of powder lie with deadly destruction embodied in its inert mass. The fuse is laid, and at early morn on the 30th of July the match is to be applied. But daylight is past, and the troops rest impatient and inquiring upon their arms. The suspense is painful. Minutes cease hours, and yet no unusual sound disturbs the peace of that July morning. At last two heroic spirits, a commissioned and a non-commissioned officer of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania, volunteer to enter the mine and learn the cause of the delay or failure. It seemed almost certain death for them to enter the tunnel. The explosion is liable to occur at any moment and blow them to atoms, but they went in.

The fuse was found defective, and was speedily replaced, and ere the sun had risen high over the old hills of Virginia, the earth shook with the tremor of an earthquake, and through the earth thrown high in air the exploding powder "lazed like lightning, casting a lurid glare upon the confused mass of dismantled guns, shattered caissons, smoking camp equipment and mangled human bodies. Simultaneously the order to charge rang out, and the third division of the Ninth Corps advanced to the slaughter. The enemy, stunned, almost paralyzed with fear and panic-stricken, scattered in all directions. The concentrated fire from a half hundred guns made a pandemonium indescribable. Into the vast crater into which the explosion had converted the fort the troops were huddled. There was a "strange and inexplicable delay, which gives the enemy time to rally their flying forces. The hostile, angry guns enfiladed the crater with fatal effect. The attempt to advance is met with a courage born of despair. A general advance of the corps was ordered. The Fifty-first has reached the breastworks. In the forefront behold an intrepid spirit urging his men forward. Waving his sword and calling to his brave boys to follow, he rallies the enemy's impetuous ranks, and gallantly meets the foe. Such was the fate of the heroic Capt. Samuel H. Sims, of the Fifty-first New York Volunteers.

Biting The Finger Nails.

"A novel incident resulting from a habit of very common prevalence among nervous people was brought to my notice recently," said a leading physician of Philadelphia to a reporter the other day. "A young lady presented herself at my office and complained of a constant irritation in her throat. Two weeks previously she had been taken with a very severe attack of sore throat, which was treated by the family physician. Under his care, she said, the inflammation quickly subsided, but there still remained a sensation of irritation. Examination revealed a small fleshy-looking object about the size of a kernel of wheat adherent to the tissues posterior to the left tonsil by the one end. The other parts of the throat were normal. The little mass could not be detached by a cotton-covered probe, but by the use of forceps it was easily removed, and on examination proved to be a piece of finger-nail which had become embedded in a cheesy deposit. A broken piece of the nail was also removed from under the mucous membrane at the same spot by a sharp pointed probe. "The lady then confessed to the habit of biting her finger-nails, and moreover could remember that a day or two previous to her throat trouble a piece of nail she had bitten off had become lost in her mouth, but after it had caused a fit of coughing she had forgotten all about it until reminded by the discovery."

European Libraries.

THE European country which possesses the largest number of public libraries is, says the *Library Journal*, Austria. In Austria there are no fewer than 577 public libraries, containing 5,375,000 volumes, without reckoning maps and manuscripts—a total which comes out at 26 volumes per 100 of the population. France possesses 500 public libraries, containing 4,598,000 volumes and 135,000 manuscripts, or 12 volumes per 100 of the inhabitants; Italy ranking next with 493 libraries, 4,349,000 volumes and 330,000 manuscripts, or 16 volumes per 100. In Germany the public libraries number 393, containing 2,640,000 volumes and 58,000 manuscripts, or 11 volumes per hundred. Great Britain possesses only 200 public libraries according to these statistics, volumes numbering 2,871,000, and the manuscripts 26,000. There are 145 libraries in Russia, with 925,000 volumes and 24,000 manuscripts, or a fraction over one volume to 100 persons. It is noteworthy that in Bavaria alone the public libraries number 169, with 1,363,000 and 24,000 manuscripts.