

MISCELLANEOUS.

A PATENT PIANO PLAYER.—Learning to play on the pianoforte is to become a thing of the past! A patent piano player has just been invented by a Frenchman, by means of which, it is said, the veriest novice can perform the most difficult pieces. The instrument is thus described:—It occupies a position in front of the keyboard of the piano, and extends from above it to the floor. Over the keys of the piano are keys corresponding to those beneath them. These are the fingers of the machine, and they have this advantage over the human hand, that they have a finger for every note. The top of the machine is about one foot in width, and has in the centre two rollers, which are moved by a crank. These carry the music through, and as it passes the piano plays it. The music is on paper, and the notes are made by cutting holes in squares. As these holes pass a certain point, they allow a hammer to pass through, and the stroke of that hammer is communicated to its own key on the piano. Each key has its hammer. It only requires that these holes be cut at proper intervals, to strike any number of keys in a given series. The machine can be adapted to any instrument with keys.

VITAL STATISTICS.—The rate of mortality is 33,333,333 every year; 91,954 every day; 3,730 every hour; 60 every minute; 1 every second. The average duration of life is 33 years. One fourth part of the population dies before the 7th year; one-half before the 17th. Only 1 in 10,000 reaches the 100th; only 1 in 500 the 65th year. Married people live longer than unmarried ones, tall persons longer than short ones. Only 65 persons in 100 contract marriage. Only the eighth part of the male population is fit to bear arms. One hundred years ago France was the most populous empire in Europe. At that time Russia had 17 millions of inhabitants; Austria, 18 millions; Germany, 15 millions; France, 24 millions. Now the population of Russia is 74 millions; of Germany, 41 millions; of Austria and Hungary, 36 millions; of France, 36 millions; and of Great Britain and Ireland, 32 millions.

NOBLE BLOOD A MYTH.—It is an amusing speculation to look back and compute what number of men and women among the ancients clubbed their endeavors to the production of a single modern. Thus a present nobleman, for instance, is 1; his father and mother were 2; his grandfathers and grandmothers were 4; his great grandfathers and great grandmothers were 8; the next predecessors will count 16; and at the next twenty-first remove, the figures reach the astounding number of 1,048,576. Here are only computed twenty-one generations, which, allowing three generations to be one hundred years, carry us back no further than the Norman Conquest, at which time, each present nobleman—to exclude all ignoble blood from his veins—ought to have had 1,048,576 noble ancestors! Carry this reckoning back three hundred years further, and the number amounts to about 500,000,000, which clearly indicates that the pretension to such purity of blood in ancient families is a mere joke.

POPULATION OF LARGE CITIES.—According to the Registrar-General, the population of the largest towns of England is as follows:—London, 3,400,700; Liverpool, 510,640; Manchester, 355,339; Birmingham, 366,862. This return, however, gives no real idea of the crowds that are concentrated in the great centres of population. Salford, for instance, is as much a part of Manchester as Woolloomooloo of Sydney, and Salford has nearly 150,000 inhabitants; and the "Black Country" of Staffordshire, with its hundred of thousands of inhabitants, is practically a continuation of the town of Birmingham. Liverpool alone has a population greater than that of New South Wales, and London a greater population than all the Australasian colonies.

A RAILROAD NOTION.—The 'Chicago Tribune' gives an account of a project devised by a correspondent to carry grain to New York by means of a wire cable, to which would be attached bins 5ft. long, and capable of holding two bushels each. At distances of ten miles would be stationed engines of 150 horse power, to be used in the endless cable, the operation of which would be precisely like that of an ordinary elevator, except that it would carry its load horizontally, instead of lifting it. The inventor thinks that by this process wheat can be moved from Chicago to New York at a cost of about ten cents per bushel, after leaving a margin for repairs and interest on cost of construction. The strength of cable required would make the scheme a failure; but it is remarked that it brings to mind the fact that before the success of locomotives on railroads was an accomplished fact, and even at the time when the first railroad where they were ever used was being made, it was expected that the trains would be drawn by endless cables worked by stationary engines.

AN AIR MACHINE.—A new air machine has been constructed in the House of Commons. By means of this apparatus a constant supply of air, cooled to any required degree even in the warmest weather, can be supplied at the rate of from 60,000 to 90,000 gallons per minute. The house contains about 90,000 gallons of air, so that when the apparatus is working at its maximum it is possible to renew the air without sensible draught every six minutes. Previously when the windows were opened the air used to rush in and escape in part through the roof, without providing a proper supply for the occupants of the chamber. The temperature then rose, and the result was directly the reverse of what was expected. The improved mode of ventilation is quite independent of open windows and of the fans (formerly in use), which were objectionable on account of draughts and dust. It is to be hoped that, from experiments that have been made with the use of cotton wool, it will be possible to supply comparatively pure air during the prevalence of the densest fog. The ingenious invention of Peaucillet has been applied to produce perfect rectilinear movement of the piston. The whole of the apparatus has been constructed in the workshops of the Houses of Parliament.

BREAKING THE NEWS GENTLY.—"When the lamented Judge Bagley tripped and fell down the court-house stairs and broke his neck," says Mark Twain in the 'Galaxy,' it was a great question how to break the news to poor Mrs Bagley. But finally the body was put into Higgins' waggon, and he was instructed to take it to Mrs B., but

to be very guarded and discreet in his language, and not to break the news to her at once, but to do it gradually and gently. When Higgins got there with his sad freight, he shouted till Mrs Bagley came to the door; then he said:—'Does the widdler Bagley live here?' 'The widow Bagley? No, sir!' 'I'll bet she does. But have it your own way. Well, does Judge Bagley live here?' 'Yes; Judge Bagley lives here.' 'I'll bet he don't. But never mind—it ain't for me to contradict. Is the Judge in?' 'No.' 'I jest expected as much. Because, you know—take ho'd o' suthin', mum, for I'm a going to make a little communication, and I reckon maybe it'll jar you some. There's been an accident, mum; I've got the old judge curled up here in the waggon—and when you see him you'll acknowledge yourself that an inquest is about the only thing that could be a comfort to him.' After the above specimen of gentleness, we would not care to see Mr Higgins "cutting up rough."

During the hearing of a case in Melbourne, a novel feature presented itself in the shape of an English youth, who acted as Chinese interpreter. His name is Wm. Henry Hutton, and he has been brought down by the police from Beechworth to interpret in the Chinese lottery cases. He speaks Chinese most fluently (the 'Age' says), and does not hesitate in the least for words. On Monday he astonished a Chinaman in the box by the manner in which he elicited the evidence. He does not take half the time to gather from the Chinese witnesses what they have to state that Fook Shing does, and he conveys the result of his interpretation to the bench in the most lucid manner. It appears that he spent two years and a half learning from books, and since then he has spent eight or nine years conversing in the language, and now he can speak in seventeen different dialects of the Chinese language, in addition to reading it. One peculiarity he has is that he can express himself in fewer words than the Chinese themselves.

An announcement has been made to the effect that the Holy See has issued a rescript commanding his Eminence Cardinal Cullen to call a Synod of the Church in Ireland to deliberate upon several questions of first-rate importance; and it is further stated that a Synod will, accordingly, be held in Dublin or Maynooth about the end of July or beginning of August.

The new English postmaster-general, it is stated, is strongly in favor of reducing the newspaper postage to one farthing; but as the reduction, if carried out at once over the whole kingdom, would lead to a serious diminution of revenue, it is probable that it may be preceded by the application of the farthing rate to the districts in which particular newspapers are published. By this plan the present carriage of single newspapers by railways would be superseded, very much to the convenience of the public. It is also rumoured that the telegraphic charges to newspapers will shortly undergo favorable revision.

The 'Paris Journal' makes the following statement: "Last night M. Besombe, a broker, in the Rue Lebon, presented himself at police station in a state of extreme alarm. He declared that his wife had no sooner retired to bed than she arose and attacked him very violently. She was foaming at the mouth and tried to bite him. His cries brought the neighbours to his assistance, but they had all great difficulty to avoid being bitten by the poor woman. The police went immediately to the house, and, after a severe struggle, succeeded in overpowering Madame Besombe, whom they found foaming at the mouth and grinding her teeth. She was removed to the Beaujon Hospital. A few days before she had been bitten by a mad cat. The wound had been cauterized, but it was too late.

The work of internal Irish Catholic reorganisation proceeds steadily in the University. The faculty of law has just been placed on an active footing by the appointment of two of the most rising members of the junior Irish Bar to chairs of English Law and of Jurisprudence; Mr Richard Paul Carton, who was called in 1863, and Mr Hugh MacDermott, who made his studies in the Catholic University, called in 1862. Amongst the legal objections urged by some of the senators of the Dublin University against the incorporation of the Catholic College into the former foundation, is (the 'Tablet' says) the unrepealed portion of the Relief Act, 1793 (33 Geo. III., cap 21, sec. 7), and also the penal clause in the Emancipation Act against Jesuits; as it is alleged that the direction of the whole Catholic University has recently been placed under Jesuit Fathers. For the latter statement there is not a shadow of ground. Two Jesuits, FF. Barron and Keating, have been placed over St. Patrick's Collegiate House, in charge, as deans, of the domestic life, discipline, and training of the students resident therein—a highly important duty—but these Fathers exercise no further function, fill no chairs, nor in any wise, save that one of them may have a seat on the Rectorial Council, direct the general administration of the University.

That the Irish Land Question is yet far from being settled must now, we think, be plain even to the most ardent admirer of the Gladstone nostrum. In various counties in each of the four provinces, rents are being raised and notices to quit served in quite the old fashion, despite the famous sliding scale and the two-and-sixpenny stamp. As a consequence of this, the farmers are in many districts forced to combine in their own defence. In Kilkenny a new Tenant League is in full working order, while in Queen's County the Independent Club has resolved to promote the assembling of another Land Conference in Dublin, one of the objects of which shall be the founding of a Farmers' Defence Association for all Ireland.

Mr Justice Lawson has delivered judgment at Galway, unseating Mr O'Donnell, convicting him of the personal exercise of undue influence and intimidation, and condemning him in the heavy costs of the petition trial. The decision of the learned judge was received throughout the country with unmixed regret. Profound sympathy was felt with Mr O'Donnell, a young gentleman who has, at an early age, when other men are but commencing life, established in the great arena of letters a high, a deserved, and an advancing reputation. The presence of such a man in Parliament was an honor and an advantage to Ireland; and the vast majority of his countrymen, including many who differ from Mr O'Donnell in political opinions, regret that so honorable and so promising a career should experience even a temporary check.