

GENERAL NEWS.

Raciborski, the great German physiologist, states that the heating of the earth by the sun causes magnetic currents from the equator to each pole. We should lie, therefore, in the direction of these currents; if we lie across these the result is unpleasant, and want of sleep is the consequence. The head to the north is the best position, to the west the worst. Physicians who have charge of hospitals all attend to the directions in which the beds are placed, and with the best results. When the Prince of Wales was ill with fever he suffered much from sleeplessness; attention was drawn to the position of his bed, which was placed in the proper direction, and with the happiest result.

Hawthorne wrote as follows concerning "Spiritualism." Alas! my countrymen, we have fallen on an evil age! If these phenomena have not humbug at the bottom, so much the worse for us. What can they indicate in a spiritual way, except that the soul of man is descending to a lower state than it has ever before reached while incarnate? We are pursuing a downward course in the eternal march, and thus bringing ourselves into the same range with beings whom death, in requital of their gross and evil lives, has degraded below humanity. To hold intercourse with spirits of this order we must stoop and grovel in some element more vile than earthly dust. These goblins, if they exist at all, are but the shadows of past mortality; outcasts, mere refuse stuff, adjudged unworthy of the eternal world, and, on the most favorable supposition, dwindling gradually into nothingness. The less we have to do with them the better, lest we share their fate.

It often happens to an actor to find himself confronting an audience with whom he is evidently wholly out of sympathy. His playing may be excellent, and at other times he may be admired; but occupants of pit and gallery had looked for another sort of entertainment, and will not consent to be baulked of their expected treat. In these circumstances the majority of actors resign themselves to misfortune, and go through the performance with the best grace they can assume. We venture to think that they might take a hint from the actor, Mr. Samuel Butler, one of whose feats was recorded in a paper read the other day before the Manchester Literary Club. He was bold enough one evening in a theatre usually devoted to melodrama to personate Macbeth. The occupants of the gallery, who had anticipated the ordinary exciting scenes, were disappointed, and became so demonstrative that it seemed as if the performance must come to an end. At last Mr. Butler saw the necessity of throwing a sop to Cerberus, and advancing to the footlights coolly remarked, "I see what you want." He then deliberately drew a chalk line along the middle of the stage, and, "after a word to the leader of the band, folded his arms skimbo, and then and there danced a Lancashire clog hornpipe in a manner that brought down the house." Having finished he went again to the front, and thus addressed the now conciliated gallery—"You have had what you paid for; we will now go on with 'Macbeth.' History does not tell how these bold tactics ultimately succeeded; but they certainly did not deserve to fail.

The nuns in the convent attached to the Church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna are about to be driven from their home in order to give place to one of the numerous Governmental offices who are said to be required for the ruling of this unhappy country. These nuns will, it is said, be sent to the Convent delle Purificazioni, near the Piazza Barberini.

The clever writer in the 'Argus,' under the *nom de plume* of "The Vagabond," made, according to his own statements, some startling discoveries in connection with several institutions he visited. He has forgotten one important discovery which he made, and as "modest men are of their own merits dumb," I will briefly narrate the facts:—"The Vagabond" is, or was, or professed to be, a surgeon; while on a visit to the Melbourne Cemetery on the look out for material, for a contribution to the 'Argus,' he accidentally kicked against a hard, white substance among the gravel on one of the paths. Closer examination proved the obstruction to be a bone. Several other bones were unearthed close by, and "The Vagabond," having examined them carefully, carried them into the office, and said to the person in charge—"Is it not disgraceful that human bones are to be found imbedded in the gravel pathways in this cemetery? Such a state of affairs is a disgrace to our common humanity. How do you, sir, account for the matter?" "Well," said the person addressed, "I really cannot say anything on the subject just now, but will make inquiries. Are you sure they are human bones?" "Yes," replied "The Vagabond," "I am a surgeon, and I am satisfied they are human bones." He left, promising to call next day for an explanation. Shortly afterwards one of the grave-diggers came into the office, when he was startled by the query—"How do you account for human bones being found in the gravel walk at the rear of the office?" "Human bones, be hanged," said the grave-digger. "Them's the mutton bones left by my dog. They were found in the exact spot where he plants the bones when he polishes them off." A gentleman called next day and received the explanation, but an account of the startling discovery now finds its way into print for the first time.—'Advocate.'

The alleged increase of drunkenness in Ireland has lately been the theme upon which many English public men and English newspapers have preached eloquent sermons, and it is unfortunately too true that the consumption of intoxicating liquors in Ireland is not decreasing—"we own it; we deplore it; we condemn it"—but it is at least some consolation to know that we are not so bad in that respect as some of our neighbors. During the year 1875 it appears that no less than 203,989 persons were apprehended for being "drunk and disorderly" in England—a far larger proportion of the population than the same class of unhappy people in Ireland. It is also stated that 450,000 out of the 600,000 paupers in England have become pauperized by excessive drinking, and that 2,500,000 men, women and children are recorded as being members of drunkards' families. The number of gallons of pure alcohol contained in

the liquor consumed in England is estimated at 84,000,000 gallons, which is valued at £130,000,000! Beside these tremendous figures the statistics of drinking in Ireland appear, by contrast, almost insignificant. The latest return gives the number of gallons of spirits consumed in Ireland as 6,176,501.—'Irishman.'

The grasshoppers (say the 'Creswick Advertiser,' Victoria), have made great destruction with the gardens throughout the district. Mr. Everard, who usually makes from six to ten tons of jam and tomato sauce, will not be able to make much more than half the usual quantity this year. Some of his apple trees are stripped of the leaves, and a great many of the apples eaten. As soon as any apples fall off the trees, they are at once attacked by myriads of these plagues, and eaten up.

As I drive over the mountain passes of Switzerland, over the furka and down toward the eternal glaciers of the Rhone, I wonder how the inhabitants of the many little cottages I pass support themselves in such sterile places. So I said to the driver, "How do the people get a living here?" He looks at me surprised a moment, and then replies, "Why, they all work." And surely, just over there between a patch of snow and those heavy boulders, there is a green spot, and the Switzer has found he can raise a bit of grain or flax and some potatoes there. And beyond still is another oasis he has found, and the mother and children are mowing on it. So the wolf is kept from the door, and the little miserable cottage is their kingdom, and it is clean and respectable, and all their own. By and by the boy is going to Lucerne, with the bright prospect ahead of becoming waiter in good time, in a grand hotel. Thus the family will have a lift; then the girl will go away to better her condition, and help the parents and the younger ones. And so many just such brave hearts and honest lives have made even the hardest parts of fair Switzerland to blossom like a rose.—'Letter to Boston Advertiser.'

On Friday night, the 16th ult., Mr. L. Kong Meng, the well-known Chinese merchant, while standing at the hall door of his house, at Malvern Hill, with two of his little daughters, was surrounded all at once for a few seconds with what appeared to be a blaze of blue flame. The electrical phenomenon resolved into a ball of fire, which effected a passage through the drain leading from the bathroom, and shivered a large willow tree, standing about 10ft. from the hall door. The lightning in finding its way to earth made a large hole about 2ft. in diameter on the surface of the ground. This is the third large tree which has been split up by lightning in the same neighborhood during the last year or two.—'Advocate.'

The 'Lake Shore Visitor' says:—"Among the passengers who left Buffalo on the ill fated train that was wrecked at Ashtabula, was Father Albinus, Passionist. He was en route for Madison, a few miles west of Ashtabula, to commence a mission the following Sunday. But on being told that the train would not stop at Madison he got off at Erie, and was thus probably preserved from an awful death.

The 'Jewish World' has made investigations concerning the Protestant sects in England. It finds that they, like the Jews, are fast becoming infidels. It says: "There are three hundred curacies vacant in the English Church in London alone at this moment, from sheer inability on the part of the mitred heads of the Church to induce fervent and efficient young men to enter Holy Orders. An Oxford Professor stated some time ago, that, owing to the latent spirit of religious scepticism at the University, he had not seen a student of superior talent take Orders for ten years. We have caused extensive inquiry to be made in reference to the condition of the Church of England relative to the point under consideration, and we have unquestionable authority for asserting that large numbers of thoughtful clergymen have long ceased to believe the prominent creeds and articles in the national liturgy, and that as far as possible in their discourses they evade allusion to the 'cardinal doctrines' they are expected to preach; and the increasing section of the National Church clergy seize the first opportunity which presents itself to them to quit the pulpit and enter upon lay work, from which they can support their families without any longer doing violence to their consciences by preaching what they do not believe. . . . Similar marks of prevailing alienation from current religious faiths are quite as conspicuous among the more intelligent sections of Non-conformists. The popular Baptist divine, Mr. Spurgeon, not long since declared that the Non-conformist pulpit was 'honeycombed with philosophical infidelity.' We are, consequently, neither better nor worse off, in all probability, in respect to the encroachment of religious belief and neglect, than other faiths are."

'Charivari' publishes another Anglo-phobic cartoon to flatter the *chauvin* taste of the Parisian public. A French soldier is seated smoking at his ease. Up comes Albion, and with outstretched arms exclaims, "Dear friend, come to my assistance! What a position for you to take!" To which the soldier replies, "I am taking the same position as you did in 1870." I must, however, admit that this cut very fairly represents the popular belief in France.

Russia permits 337 foreign newspapers, 107 of which treat of politics, to cross her borders. The majority of these journals are German; but there are 55 English, 30 Slav, 19 French, 16 Swedish, 12 Italian, 10 Greek, and 1 Hebrew.

The Bishop of Cork and Dean Nevile have just commenced an important work in the capital of the South. They have re-established the Mechanics' Institute which was founded there several years ago, and intend to make it a thoroughly efficient school for affording technical instruction to the local working men. And yet the Church is sometimes accused of fostering ignorance!

Persons engaged in agricultural pursuits are now afforded an opportunity of obtaining Pirie's Double Furrow Ploughs at an unprecedentedly low price. The firm of Nimmo & Blair, Stafford-street, Dunedin, has on hand a number of these valuable farming implements, which they are prepared to dispose of at a great sacrifice. Particulars in our advertising columns.