

WAIFS AND STRAYS.

THE COAL RESERVES OF GREAT BRITAIN.—The Coal Commissioners assume a depth of 4000 feet—about four-fifths of a mile—as a fair limit to base an estimate of the quantity of coal available. On this assumption the probable quantity of coal contained in the ascertained coal-fields of the United Kingdom is set down by the Commissioners as 90,207,000,000 of tons. The coal which probably exists at workable depths under the Permian New Red Sandstone and other superincumbent strata is calculated to amount to 56,207,000,000 of tons.

NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION IN AMERICA.—The total annual circulation of newspapers printed in the State of New York is 492,770,886 copies, or more than twice the number issued in any other State. The next greatest number of issues is in Pennsylvania, where 233,380,532 copies are annually printed. Massachusetts prints 107,691,953 copies; Illinois, 102,685,204; Ohio, 93,592,448. Next comes California, with 85,669,408 newspaper sheets per annum.

RAINFALL AND ARTILLERY.—Professor Edward Poppers, of Chicago, is engaged in endeavoring to demonstrate the practicability of controlling and distributing rainfall by means of concussion, produced by the firing of artillery. His theory is deduced from an examination of 130 battles that were followed by copious rains. He claims that about sixty per cent. of all battles or bombardments of importance are followed by rain within the first twenty-four hours from the commencement of the heavy firing. All great battles in which much artillery was used were followed by rain—so far as definite information can be obtained. The average length of time between the commencement of the heavy firing and the beginning of the rain is twenty-six hours and a half. Rain follows battles in which much artillery has been used; but, musketry-firing does not bring much rain. Rains follow battles, not only in the spring and summer, but also in autumn and winter. Rains follow battles, not only in the United States and in Europe, but in the dry season in Mexico. Heavy rains follow great battles fought in time of drought. The rains following battles are generally accompanied by thunder and lightning.

MELANCTHON AND HIS MOTHER.—Sad, indeed, is the story of the last meeting of Philip Melancthon and his mother. When he was about to take leave of her at her dying bed, she raised her hands towards him, and said: "My son, it is for the last time you see your mother, I am about to die. Your turn will one day come, when you must render an account of your actions to your judge. You know that I was a Catholic, and that you have induced me to abandon the religion of my father. Tell me now, for God's sake, in what religion I ought to die?" Melancthon answered: "Mother the new doctrine is the more convenient; the other is more secure." Surely this so-called reformer, the author of the Augsburg Confession, which constitutes essentially the basis of all Protestantism, must have had some serious misgivings as to the security of his own position, or he never would or could have answered his mother in such a manner.

GEORGE III. AND ST. PAUL'S.—George III. went twice in state to St. Paul's; the second time being in 1797, to return thanks for the naval victories obtained by Howe, Jervis, and Duncan, the procession being diversified on that occasion by three artillery waggons containing the French, Spanish and Dutch flags captured during the various actions, attended by many of the gallant officers and men who had served in these actions, from the admirals to the powder-monkeys, with detachments from the marines at Chatham and Portsmouth as guards of honor.

CONDUCTIVITY OF THE NERVES.—The rate of motion in the motor nerves of the frog is 90 feet per second, and in those of a man 111.1 feet per second. If 111 feet per second be taken as the average movement for the motor nerves, and 140 for the sensors, we have a very slow rate of transmission compared with that of light, 196,000 miles per second, and that of electricity, 97,500 miles per second. A telegraphic message from England to America is transmitted as quickly as a nerve message from the head to the foot.

MAUNDAY THURSDAY.—The day preceding Good Friday, known as Maunday Thursday, is named from *dies mandati*, the day of command, on which our Divine Redeemer gave his great mandate that we should love one another. Some suppose it to be derived from the Saxon *maund*, an alms-basket, because on that day princes used to give alms to the poor from their basket, and those who partook of its contents were called *maunders*.

A MUSICAL SINECURE.—The office of the King's Cock-crower has been abolished. The duty of the official was to crow the hour each night within the precincts of the palace during Lent, instead of calling it like an ordinary watchman. The last instance on record of the cock-crower performing his duties was on the first Ash-Wednesday after the accession of the House of Hanover, when the unfortunate man got into great trouble, for George II., then Prince of Wales, being disturbed at supper by the cock-crower's entering the room and making an unpleasant noise to announce that it was "past ten o'clock," imagined that some insult was intended, and was with difficulty made to understand that such was not the case.

REUTER'S TELEGRAMS BEFORE THE ATLANTIC CABLE WAS LAID.—Before the submarine cables to America were instituted, it was said that Baron Reuter, of telegraphic celebrity, invented a capital way of getting the American news early. The steamers could not be persuaded to stop to land anything, so Reuter sent over agents to the States. Before returning they collected all their documentary news, and making the papers into a parcel, put them into a water-tight barrel. On the top of the barrel was attached a long staff and flag. A swift steamer was engaged to meet the inward-bound vessel, as she approached the coast of Ireland. When the agent saw the despatch steamer near enough, he watched his opportunity, and threw overboard the barrel containing his despatches; the boat of this steamer then picked up the barrel; the vessel went at once into harbor, and the news was quickly telegraphed to London. [This may appear smart work, but it has been surpassed by the enterprise of one of our colonial journals. Before Australia had been in cable communication with

the mother-country the greatest rivalry existed among the Melbourne dailies in first publishing the European intelligence on arrival of the branch steamer at Glenelg, South Australia. The 'Argus,' however, owing to the fact that it had the wires laid into its office, of course possessed a material advantage. The proprietors, however, were not satisfied with beating their local opponents, but determined to publish an "extra" with mail news, before the steamer had been actually sighted by the South Australians, and the method of accomplishment was this: They established a depot for carrier pigeons at Adelaide, paying a man a handsome yearly sum for their care and training. One of the reporting staff was regularly despatched on the trip to King George's Sound, taking one of the carriers with him, and on the return passage to Adelaide he summarised the most important items of intelligence, which being attached to the pigeon it was let loose when within fifty or sixty miles of land. Immediately on arrival of the carrier the agent, who of course would be on the look-out, at once repaired to the telegraph office, and thus the principal events of the month would be known to the Melbourne public before the South Australians had sighted the steamer.]

PROFESSIONAL PROFIT.—The earnings of Sir Astley Cooper afford a striking example of the slow promotion of even the most skilful and deserving of doctors. In the first year he netted five guineas; in the second, £26; in the third, £64; in the fourth £96; in the fifth, £100; in the seventh, £400, in the eighth, £610; in the ninth, the year in which he secured his hospital appointment, £1000. The highest amount he ever received in any one year was £24,000; but for many years his average income was £15,000. The most that the famous Abernethy ever realised in one year was £5000, showing that his vagaries and eccentricities were by no means a source of profit to him.

INFALLIBLE CURE FOR DRUNKENNESS.—There is a famous prescription in use in England for the cure of drunkenness, by which thousands are said to have been assisted in recovering themselves. The prescription came into notoriety through the efforts of John Vine Hall, commander of the steamship Great Eastern. He had fallen into such habitual drunkenness that his most earnest efforts to reclaim himself proved unavailing. At length he sought the advice of an ancient physician, who gave him a prescription which he followed faithfully for seven months. At the end of that time he had lost all desire for liquor, although he had been led captive many times by a most debasing appetite. The prescription, which he afterwards published, and by which so many drunkards have been assisted to reform, is as follows:—Sulphate of iron, 5 grains; magnesia, 10 grains; peppermint water, 11 drachms; spirit of nutmeg, 1 drachm; twice a day. This preparation acts as a tonic and stimulant, and so partially supplies the place of the accustomed liquor, and prevents that absolute physical and moral prostration which follows a sudden breaking-off from the use of stimulating drinks.

THE ALL-POWERFUL "WE."—The plural style of speaking "we" among Kings was begun by King John, A.D. 1119. Before that time sovereigns used the singular person in their edicts. The German and the French sovereigns followed the example of John in 1200. When editors began to say "we," we do not, nor is it known.

THE BIBLE FOR THE POOR.—Wood engravings of devotional subjects date from the earliest years of the fifteenth century. At that time the entire Bible could only be obtained in manuscript, and at an immense cost. For the benefit of the common people a book was issued between the years 1430 and 1450, containing wood engravings of scripture scenes, with appropriate extracts from the Bible. It was called the *Biblia Pauperum*; and by its very name made the word known among the people.

FOLK LORE ABOUT BABIES.—"Old ladies, mothers of families," writes a correspondent of 'Notes and Queries,' "say that if babies have strength to live seven days, they will most likely live seven weeks, and if they live over seven weeks, they will live seven months; and unless something particularly bad happens to them they will reach the age of seven years, providing the seven months are safely got over. My grandmother, who brought up eleven children out of twelve, never would allow her babies to go out of her personal care until they were fourteen (twice seven) months old—till they had "stiffened in their limbs" as she said. It is an old belief in Derbyshire that if a child cries loudly at its birth, and lifts up an open hand, it is born to command; but if it clutches with its thumb tucked in, it will be of a cringing, slavish disposition, and probably will be very unhealthy all its life."

THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND FREE-MASONRY.

For many years back the nation has been periodically astonished at finding the ceremonies connected with the inception of public buildings given over to the management of a secret society. Of all countries in the world, America affords the least excuse for the existence of secret societies at all; they are contrary to the genius of our political and social system, and are not looked on with favour by the great body of the people, as is evident from the agitation against them, and from the following petition, which has lately been forwarded to Washington:—

"To the President of the United States—
"The undersigned citizens of the United States learning, through public announcement, that it is proposed to lay the corner-stone of the new Government building in Chicago with Masonic ceremonies on the 24th of June next—St. John's Day, so-called—respectfully represent that under our Constitution and laws, no society, sect or order, is entitled to official preferment or precedence over any other order, sect, or society, and they, therefore, do earnestly protest that the order to which it is thus proposed to delegate a work of national interest should not be allowed such recognition, either through its festivals, or its rites and ceremonies, which are offensive to the great body of the American people."

This petition is signed by 25,000 citizens from various States, and it certainly expresses the sentiment of countless thousands besides.—'Pilot.'