

Scientific American.

MUNN & CO., Editors and Proprietors.
PUBLISHED WEEKLY AT
NO. 37 PARK ROW, NEW YORK.

O. D. MUNN.

A. E. BEACH.

TERMS.

One copy, one year, postage included.....\$3 20
One copy, six months, postage included.....1 60

Club Rates:

Ten copies, one year, each \$2 70, postage included.....\$27 00
Over ten copies, same rate each, postage included.....2 70

By the new law, postage is payable in advance by the publishers, and the subscriber then receives the paper free of charge.

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VOLUME XXXII., No. 6. [NEW SERIES.] *Thirtieth Year.*

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1875.

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THE EXAMPLE OF FRANCE.

We think it is Smiles, who, in one of his biographies, tells of an engineer who said that, if you asked a man what he thought of a financial or political question, he would give you an elaborate opinion without a moment's hesitation; but if the question referred to the best kind of cement, he would perhaps take a week to decide on his answer. We are not going to ask our readers to listen to our theories on the finances, but propose to call attention to a few facts in relation to these matters, as presented by Mr. Bennet, an able financial writer of France. Certainly, if any people are in need of instruction on the currency question, it is ourselves, and we commend Mr. Bennet's pamphlet to the attentive consideration of all who feel inclined to learn. We have only space to present a few of its salient points.

The Franco-German war ended in May, 1871; and in two years and a half from that time, the French had paid to Germany an indemnity of \$1,000,000,000 in specie, their own expenses incurred in the war having reached to about an equal amount. In making this large payment, with an inconvertible paper currency, the latter was maintained almost continually at par, never having depreciated more than 2½ per cent. These are interesting facts, and in his pamphlet Mr. Bennet gives us the reasons. It is first to be noticed that, for nearly the whole period since the war, France has been the creditor of other nations, and it was on the occasion of the exchange turning the other way that the paper currency was depreciated. It is estimated that the amount of specie in France is largely in excess of the legal tender circulation, and the Bank of France has a specie reserve of 52 per cent of its outstanding circulation. In other words, the paper money of France is strengthened by specie, which, though not in circulation, is still in the country, and can be utilized if occasion arises. Mr. Bennet, while contending that bank bills not fully protected by specie reserve are a source of great danger, shows their great convenience and, in his view, absolute necessity, in these times, if their issue is un-

net in a clear and thorough manner, and we hope that his pamphlet will be widely circulated. Our own finances have not been managed in so wise a manner, and the condition of affairs in the country is not so prosperous at present, that we can afford to disregard the "Example of France," which country, incurring a war debt nearly two thirds as large as our own, in the short space of ten months is apparently on the direct road to a sound financial system, without having experienced a serious monetary crisis.

THE "SCIENCE" OF SPIRITUALISM.

On page 359 of the last volume of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, we presented some of the teachings of science regarding spiritualism; today we further elucidate the subject by brief allusions to some of the facts in the history of this latest epidemic of superstition.

It broke out about twenty-five years ago, and the manifestations were popularly known as Rochester knockings or spirit rappings. The first mediums were three sisters; their name was Fox. They invented the raps, the rap language, and a good part of the spiritual lingo. They originated the séance, and drove a lively business. Spiritualism speedily became a recognized institution; there was no lack of mediums; notoriety and money were the substantial incentives; people, it is said, are fond of humbug, and pay more liberally for it than for the necessities of life. The majority of people, as at the present day, looked upon spiritualism as a supremely silly thing; the scientific world treated it with ridicule or with a silence inspired by disgust and contempt. There were investigations; and although many of them were very foolish, the rapping trick was fairly exposed. The raps were traced to the persons of the Fox girls. The mechanism of the raps was concealed and protected by the defences of womanhood; to the modest investigator the girls' skirts were barriers more formidable than stone walls. Had women dressed like men, there surely could have been no spirit rappings, and probably no spiritualism; we commend the fact to Herr Teufelsdröck, the great philosopher of clothes, and we shall look for a discussion of it in a future edition of his "Sartor Resartus." Of the devices employed by the early mediums, the most elaborate and successful was that of a bar of lead suspended at its center by an elastic cord attached to and operated by the leg; of course this was available only to women, and the men were obliged to resort to something else.

The devotees appeared in swarms, and at the very beginning, and with the same capacity of swallowing as those of the present day; let a jackass bray in the presence of your genuine spiritualist, and, at a hint from his medium, he hears therein only the gentle and loving voice of his dead grandmother. The early exposures counted for little among the faithful; a thousand bogus raps, they said, could not disturb their faith in the one that they knew to be genuine. Also the theory was invented at a very early day that there are wicked spirits, which make honest mediums cheat and lie.

Thus the Rochester knockings became modern spiritualism, with a vitality and diffusiveness comparable to those of the Canada thistle. From the ridiculous beginning of what, in its inception, was probably an innocent freak of a little girl, we have today a superstition which will make the nineteenth century memorable for all time.

Spiritualism, as an ism or theory, was soon perfected. But the charlatanism, by which it is mainly kept alive, depends upon juggling tricks which may be modified and improved. For jugglery, like all human arts, is improvable, and is governed by the laws of evolution. The raps grew into a thousand and one modified forms. Some of the new tricks, like the spirit speaking and writing, and planchette, were too thin, and are retained only among the most saturated of the devotees, while those that had the strength of real merit of ingenuity, like the Davenport's cabinet and rope tying, have maintained their popularity. At last, and we wish we could believe it the final culmination of such things, we have the spirit materialization. The materialization trick was invented by a medium of this city, named Gordon, about two years ago. His exhibition was somewhat artistic, and is worthy of a description. A curtain of mosquito netting, stretched across the room, separated the operator and his paraphernalia from the spectators; the netting served to protect the medium from intrusion, and also to give a more ghostly appearance to the objects exhibited. In the middle of the spiritual sanctum was erected a gorgeous altar or throne, about which Gordon, arrayed in a priestly robe, incanted or chanted during the performance. The light was turned down to that faintness in which ghosts and spirits love to walk abroad. Gordon makes his right arm invisible by drawing over it a black cloak. He raises this arm away from and at the side of his body, holding in his right hand a common paper mask or false face, such as the children get for their amusement at a cost of five or ten cents each. Then he gently moves the mask through the air, or ducks it or bobs it up and down, etc. The performance is repeated with variations, other masks and other motions, for an hour or two. Some of the masks are a little dressed up by means of a white handkerchief thrown over a part or dangling from the lower end; in such simple ways is an old lady with a white cap, or a baby in a long dress, constructed; a bride is got up by placing a gauze veil in front of the mask. Gordon's repertoire of masks was extensive; he was able to bring up the spirits of men, women, and babies of all races of mankind.

From the front of the netting, the view, especially to the eyes of the devotee, was impressive. Gordon was a solemn great high priest, or head center; and in response to his in-

sights were often recognized. It was a common thing to hear, from the crowd of eager spectators, sighs and sobs, and such expressions as "Is that you, Jane?" "Is it my grandmother?" "Is your name Smith?" "It is my darling Bobbie; are you happy?" To all of which, through Gordon's skillful manipulation of the masks, came the appropriate responses.

But Gordon's career as a materializer lasted only a few weeks. One evening, in the midst of the performance, a gentleman of the audience leaped over an intervening table, dodged Gordon's confederate, dashed through the mosquito netting and had Gordon securely in his arms. Gordon was thus caught in the act; he held a mask in his hand, and others were taken from the folds of his robe and other places.

In our next article, we shall give further particulars concerning other forms of "spiritual materializations."

TO OUR FRIENDS.

In dealing with our legions of friends, it is our earnest desire to give satisfaction to every one of them. At this season of the year, when old subscribers are renewing and new names are coming in by the hundred every day, it is impossible to answer all enquiries the very day they are received. But should any suppose that we have overlooked their requests or slighted their interests, we hope they will at all times promptly inform us. Speak plainly, and do not hesitate to complain.

Our mail writers and folders are under special injunctions to write our subscribers' names upon the envelopes legibly, and fold each paper neatly. We shall be glad to be informed if anybody receives slovenly work from this office.

At the beginning of the year, many thousands of subscriptions are renewed, new clubs formed, etc. If any person fails to receive the paper or any premium to which he is entitled, we will thank him to inform us promptly.

If, by any chance, any editor or publisher, who by any agreement is to receive our paper, should fail to receive it, we shall be glad to be informed.

Persons who have written to us upon business or sent enquiries for the paper which have not been answered, are requested to repeat their enquiries. Letters sometimes fail to reach us. Be particular to mention the State in which you live. In some cases we are perplexed to know where to direct, when no State is given and there are many post offices of the same name.

HAVE A SPECIALTY.

The sooner people begin to comprehend that practically there is no business, calling, trade, or profession which any one man can master in all its branches in a lifetime, the better will it be for every individual's prosperity. We believe that half the failures in the great struggle for livelihood are due to men trying to do too much, trying to fulfill all the requirements indicated by a name because their fathers did, but forgetting that, in their fathers' time, that name included an aggregate of labor of very different extent to that which it now encompasses. Every day as it closes leaves the world richer in knowledge, and the aggregation of many days produces a store of learning which increases vastly the quantity which the beginner must master ere he approaches proficiency. A couple of centuries ago all that the world knew of the healing art was within the easy grasp of any average intellect. Now, there is no physician living, however eminent, who pretends to have mastered or even to be moderately versed in all the details of medicine and surgery. So it is with Science, with law, with mechanics, with journalism, until each calling has reduced itself to an agglomeration of specialties; and, without doubt each specialty in the future will be divided and subdivided as learning and education advance.

That which is true of the professions is equally true of the trades. The lawyers say that the man most to be dreaded as an adversary is "he of one book." The individual who knows only one thing, but that root and branch, is unquestionably abler and wiser than another who has dabbled in this and that until his mind is but a jumble of ill assorted ideas, superficial at the best. If a mechanic, for example, finds that there is any one operation for which he has a special liking, and can accomplish it just a little better than anything else, that is the thing for him to stick to. He should make up his mind to cling to it through thick and thin, to try and improve certain parts until a uniform perfection is attained. It does not take the world very long to discover who is the best man for this or that purpose; and when it finds out that man, who has made a specialty of one operation and unquestionably does it better than anybody else, the world must avail itself of his labor and, in so doing, must pay him his own terms.

We do not mean to argue that a man should be like a horse, capable of entertaining but one idea at a time, for that would be to advocate narrowmindedness; but we do mean to say that no man should be without one essential and prevailing object, in the prosecution of which he is determined to excel, and it does not make any difference what that is, whether cleaning a gutter or saving lives. We should liken this uppermost purpose in a man's brain to an elaborate treatise on one subject alone in a library of general encyclopedias. The last indicate the expansion and grasp of one's views on all things, the first their concentration on a life work. The simile is all the more apt, for, after all, when we come to examine everything we know outside our one calling, we find we are only in possession of a more or less copious index. And we are led to the certain conclusion that the very best we can ever hope to do in the attainment of knowledge is to learn where this fact or that theory is to be found most