

A Contrast in Inventions.

That we are the most inventive people in the world, says the New York *Tribune*, is a well known fact. Indeed, the idea has been put forward (in this country) that we are the most remarkable people on the face of the earth in all respects, and this is probably so, the very fact that other nations do not always recognize it being of itself sufficient to show their great inferiority. But it is not to the purpose to enlarge on this in the present instance, our aim being simply to describe a certain small but wonderful invention just reported from the State of Minnesota. It is interesting to note in passing the marked difference in the character of the inventions in Iowa and Minnesota. Lying close together as the two States do, we would expect, the writer adds, to find their inventive talent running in generally parallel lines, but such is not the case. The inventive genius of Iowa seems to be turned almost wholly to apparatus to circumvent the liquor prohibition law. Thus we have the Dissolving Liquor Store and the Flying Dutchman Saloon, already mentioned in the *Tribune's* columns, the walking stick which holds a pint, the pocket bible which holds a quart, the amateur camera which holds a quart and a half, the opera glass which holds two drinks, and the raised and glorified silk hat which holds two quarts, a pair of glasses, a silver spoon, a lemon, a quarter of a pound of sugar, and a dozen cloves. In Minnesota, where no prohibitory law exists, we find invention turned to the arts of peace, and scarcely a day passes that the household, the office, or the factory is not enriched by a new idea of some bright Minnesota man. We gather the particulars of the latest invention in that quarter from the columns of the *Republican*, an enterprising weekly published at Lake City.

The new article in question is the Ne Plus Ultra Rocking Chair, the invention of Mr. A. R. Watson, and is now on exhibition at Crane Brothers' mammoth jewelry store. Mr. Watson's idea is that the rocking chair should stand for comfort; but the ordinary rocking chair, though surpassing every other invention of man for its comfortable features, does not embody everything in that line. It has been Mr. Watson's pleasant privilege to supply some of these missing adjuncts. Chief of these is the temperature regulator. Underneath the chair is a small bellows. This is operated by the rocking of the chair, and is connected with a brass tube which extends up the back of the chair and slightly above it, where it curves down and ends directly over the occupant's head. When sitting in this chair and rocking, a gentle but invigorating breeze is diffused over the entire person from the tube. It is especially agreeable to bald-headed men, and an air shower bath of this nature must be very pleasant for any one on a warm day. But the ingenious Mr. Watson is determined that his chair shall have all seasons for its own, and next fall he will add an attachment under the bellows consisting of a kerosene or gas heater, which will so warm the current of air that the fortunate owner of one of these chairs will find it as useful in winter as in summer. A little scented bag concealed in the bellows perfumes the air delightfully, whether it is hot or cold. The air current in the summer will be found excellent for discouraging the attentions of flies and mosquitoes, and that the bald-headed man may take his afternoon nap in it undisturbed, Mr. Watson has concealed a spring and the necessary mechanism under the bellows, so that it may be wound up like a clock and run two hours, rocking the chair, and, of course, working the bellows. A music box in the back, which plays the national airs, completes the improvements to date, though so long as Mr. Watson is spared his mental faculties, no man can tell when others may follow.

As we said, the contrast between the inventions of the two neighboring States of Iowa and Minnesota is truly striking. But how much more will those of Minnesota do for the cause of civilization? For instance, how much greater will be the influence for good of the Watson hot and cold air rocking chair than will be that of a hymn book which holds a quart—or even two quarts!

Copper Colorations of Vegetables.

At a meeting of the Paris Society of Pharmacy, December 3, 1890, a paper by M. Mestre was discussed, in which the author claimed that the copper colorations existing naturally or artificially in vegetables are perfectly harmless. He said that there was often less copper in colored conserves than in many unsuspected aliments, and the copper was found only in conditions of difficult solubility. In colored peas the average proportion of copper present was 7 cgm. to $\frac{1}{2}$ kilogramme, but he had found as much as 21 cgm. The average quantity in beans was 56 mgm., the maximum quantity was 99 mgm. Bread, he stated, contains an average of 5 mgm. of copper per kilogramme, and wheat 5 to 10 mgm. Preparations of pork contained 51 mgm., and those of geese 35 cgm. Chocolate contained 36 mgm. The conclusions of the author were that people might use and abuse the privilege of employing colored vegetables without feeling toxic effects from the copper contained in them.

[AN ORIGINAL PORTRAIT OF COLUMBUS.]

The old portrait of Christopher Columbus recently discovered at Como derives its value not only from the scarcity of authentic likenesses of the great navigator,



PORTRAIT OF COLUMBUS BY SEBASTIAN DEL PIOMBO RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT COMO.

but from its art history, as it was painted by Sebastian del Piombo.* It was formerly regarded as an heirloom in the family, now extinct, of the Giovios, and was in the possession of the writer Paul Giovio, who refers to it in his works, and had it engraved. On the failure of the male branch of the Giovio family, the portrait passed, two generations ago, to the De Orchi family, and is now in the possession of Dr. De Orchi, of Como.—*Illustrated London News*.

The Ship Railways of the Future.

In a paper lately read by John F. O'Rourke on the Chignecto ship railway, before the American Society of Civil Engineers, the author said:

"This will be the first application of rails to navigation, and Canada has secured the honor by guaranteeing for twenty years an annual sum equal to one two-thousandth the yearly receipts of the New York Custom House. As when built it will, most likely, be self-supporting, Canada may be said to have purchased the honor with a little accommodation.

"If ship railways will do all that is claimed for them, and it is morally certain that they will, a new era is about to open in transportation. A ship is not a fish,

* Sebastiano del Piombo was born in Venice in 1485, and died at Rome in 1547. He was especially celebrated as a portrait painter, his likeness of Andrew Doria, in the Doria Palace, at Rome, being one of his best known works. He also acquired fame as a painter of the portraits of the Colonnesi and of Popes Adrian V., Clement VII., and Paul III.

though that seems almost asserted in the stress that is laid on the popular statement that water is its natural element, and usage makes it difficult to think of a ship apart from water. It is lost sight of that a ship is a land-built structure of the strongest and stiffest design, fitted to withstand the tossing and buffeting of the highest seas and the wildest storms. Now pounded and overswept by a colliding wave, and the next moment bare of water almost to the keel, while all the time, perhaps, the rocking and plunging and the mighty wind is tearing the rigging and snapping the spars. Nevertheless, vessels that have lived through fifty years of such life are not uncommon.

"Lighthouses and breakwaters tell enough of the fury of the sea to ridicule any pretense of hydrostatic pressures around ships excepting in still water, or that naval constructors build ships dependent on the water pressure to keep the cargo from bursting out the sides, or that water is the natural element of ships in the caressing sense used by the good people who object to ship railways as snares of destruction.

"It therefore follows that a ship resting on blocks at short intervals, along the keel and bilges, is adequately supported, and that if borne on a suitable carriage over a smooth and rigid roadway, it will make the journey with as much ease as under the most favorable conditions afloat, or, generally speaking, that a ship is as well adapted to traveling by rail as by water.

"The Chignecto ship railway will soon be an accomplished fact. Others will quickly follow, and it takes no gift of prophecy to foresee the time when every isthmus will pass ships dry shod, if need be, and when inland cities will be open to navigation with rails, and the freight car and the ship will occupy adjoining sidings at the warehouse and factory. It is not beyond belief that a twentieth century siege may be conducted by war vessels on temporary roads, opposed by traveling fortresses on strategic railways that defend every approach."

Hydraulic Electric Lighting.

The Hartford, Conn., Electric Light Company has nearly completed a notable undertaking for utilizing the fine water power of the Farmington River, where-with to operate their central station, from which is distributed current for both light and power throughout the city of Hartford.

Under contract with the Farmington River Power Company, which owns the dam, about 300 feet long, across the Farmington River, nearly ten miles from the city, the Electric Light Company has erected a station with a full equipment of dynamos, etc., and will hereafter furnish the current for all the city street lights and for power purposes from that station.

Six dynamos are now in operation, supplying 250 street lights.

Four more are to be added, which will then generate enough electricity to supply the rest of the street lights, two hundred of which are yet supplied from dynamos operated by steam in the station on State Street. It is intended to add a large generator of 300 horse power for supplying electricity for power purposes.

The fall over the dam is 19½ feet, and the volume of water about two feet deep. The force is estimated to be equal to 1,000 h. p. The supply of water is considered to be unfailing, and far in excess of any possible future requirements of the lighting company. To convert this great power from the river, six Rodney Hunt horizontal water wheels are used, with a capacity of 800 h. p., and the power is conveyed to the dynamos by shafting and belts.

To convey the electric current to the city, 500 poles, varying from 40 to 70 feet high, have been erected, carrying eleven wires. The water power at the dam is very steady, and improvement in the city lights supplied from this source is already perceptible.

Parasitical Plants.

The author proves that a parasite growing on plants of the *Strychnos* genus contains neither strychnine nor brucine. The mistletoe growing upon the oak does not contain the blue tannin of the latter, but exclusively a green tannin. In like manner other parasites are shown not to absorb the peculiar principles of their hosts.—*A. Chatin*.