

Manchuria.

Away on the extremely opposite end to ours of the great Eurasian continent is a country to which only too little attention has as yet been paid, and which, on account of its wealth, its favorable natural position, and the intelligence of its inhabitants, will attract to itself a yearly increasing notice from Europe, and play no insignificant part in the history of the next few decades. The recent march of events has shown two rising powers pressing round Manchuria, and threatening to contest its possession with the seemingly dormant Chinese. . . . If Manchuria were such a wretchedly poor country as, for instance, Khiva, Merv, and Turkestan, and others which have fallen to the lot of the Russians, comparatively little attention need be paid to the progress of events in that distant quarter of the world. It would matter but little to other European nations whether the Russians or Japanese did or did not take the country. But Manchuria is no such desert country. It is, on the contrary, a country of exceeding richness, and of promise scarcely less than that of the Transvaal itself, and compared to which the whole of Central Africa, from Uganda to Khartoum, is of paltry insignificance. . . . The timber alone in the vast virgin forests which clothe the hill-sides over thousands of square miles must be worth many millions: for this timber is of the most valuable kind, and besides the ordinary pines, which are common all over the world, and which, being fast growing, are easily replaced when cut down, there are immense quantities of hard timber—of oak, and elm, and walnut—to replace which a century is required, and the quantity of which in the world is rapidly diminishing. . . . Manchuria is equally rich in its production of cereals and in the southern portion of such crops as indigo and tobacco. . . .

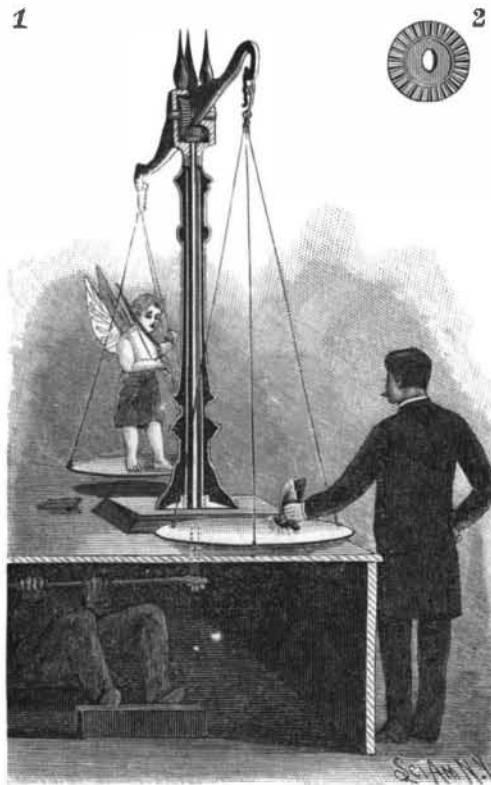
Such being the climate, the nature of the country, its soil and productions, the inhabitants, as might be expected, are a strong, hardy, vigorous race, and from the glens of Manchuria have issued three successive waves of conquest which have overrun the whole of China. The number of the original inhabitants has been augmented by streams of immigrants from China proper, and these, though slightly less robust than the original Manchus, are yet of good and sound physique. They are the very reverse of impulsive—cool, calculating, provident, and so economical that not even the manure from off the roads is allowed to be wasted, and the heat of the fire required for cooking purposes is carefully utilized by means of flues to warm the whole house. Their industry is apparent in the care bestowed upon their fields. In the summer they work from dawn till sunset, with a brief interval for the midday meal, and in the winter they start hours before daybreak on their long carrying journeys. They are grave and little given to mirth; on the whole, law abiding, amenable to control and to the restraints of social life; if not particularly warm in their devotion to their children and to their parents, at any rate not absolutely callous; and though any active benevolence is not very apparent, there are, on the other hand, few symptoms of active malevolence. But the most important trait to notice is their strong conservatism. What was good enough for their fathers the present-day inhabitants think must be good enough for them. They are intelligent and quick to grasp simple ideas, but superstitious and ignorant of natural causation; very lacking in imagination, with high powers of imitation, but no capacity for invention. They all dress alike, and in the same way in which they have dressed for centuries past; there is no difference between one house and another, and even their carts are all of the same pattern. The rigid fixity of ideas is a concomitant of their strong conservative proclivities. They have, as a rule, little regard for truth, but, in business matters, once their word is given, it may be relied on. Honesty is not a pronounced trait in their characters, nor are they remarkable for morality. And these defects must, therefore, be set against their striking industry and thrift. Their religion seldom shows itself, and has little effect upon their practical conduct. It produces in them none of that fanaticism which impels other races of Asia to deeds of war, and it imposes upon the people of Manchuria few of those restrictions as to what they may or may not eat or do with which the people of India are so fettered.—Capt. F. Younghusband, in *The Nineteenth Century*.

Coal Output of Natal.

At a recent South African banquet, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson mentioned that the monthly output of coal in Natal had increased from 12,000 tons in 1893 to 30,000 tons in 1898. He added as a notable fact that on April 16 last the ships in Durban Harbor loaded 1,000 tons of coal in the day.

"CUPID LIGHTER THAN A BUTTERFLY."
BY W. E. ROBINSON.

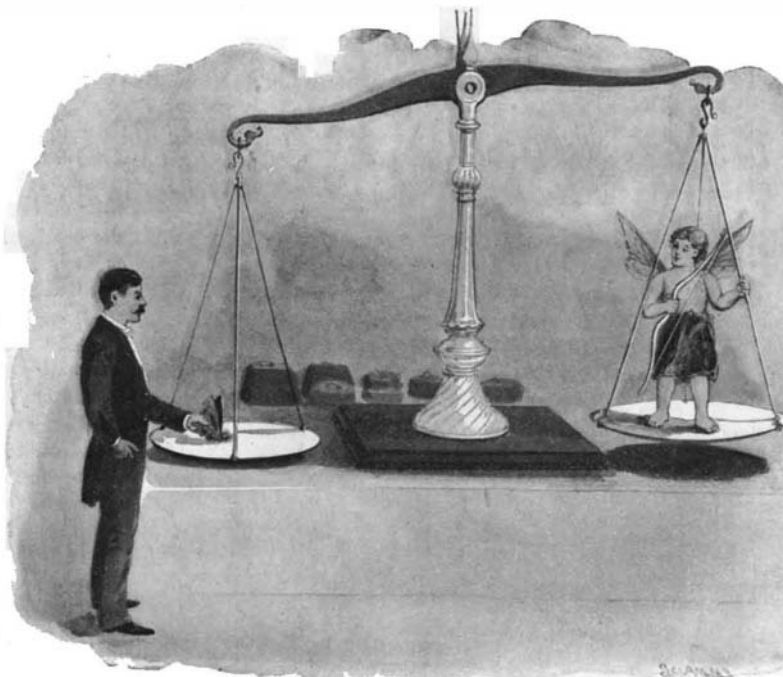
The pleasing trick which forms the subject of our engravings owes its success to the ingenious application of mechanical principles. The magician presents for inspection to the audience a large pair of balance scales. The audience is allowed to examine the various parts of the balance before it is erected on the stage. It consists of a central column and a beam resting on a knife edge and two pans suspended by cords or chains. After the column has been put in position,



THE ILLUSION EXPLAINED.

the beam is put on and a pin inserted, thus making a center for the beam to work on. A gentleman is asked to stand in one of the scale pans and then weights are gradually placed in the other pan until his exact weight is ascertained. The weights are removed and the gentleman steps down off the stage. The audience is now convinced that the scale is to all intents and purposes like the ordinary balance which is so much used in groceries for weighing tea, coffee, etc., although, of course, in the present instance it is built on a mammoth scale.

The magician now goes on to say that he will prove the old assertion that "love is lighter than a butterfly" to be absolutely true. He introduces a little boy dressed as Cupid, with wings and a bow and a quiver of arrows. When the child steps on the scale pan, it immediately sinks to the floor by his weight. The con-



"CUPID LIGHTER THAN A BUTTERFLY."

juror now takes a butterfly, and, asking all to direct their attention to the scale, drops it on the opposite pan, which immediately descends to the floor, at the same time raising the pan with the Cupid high in the air. If he takes the butterfly off, the Cupid descends, and every time the prestidigitator replaces the butterfly, Cupid is raised off the floor.

The trick depends for success upon a carefully devised and concealed mechanism. The balance beam is devoid of any preparation, but the mechanism is cleverly concealed in the column, and motion is imparted to the beam by means of a shaft and bevel gears. The hole in the beam is not perfectly round; it

is slightly oval, but not enough so to be easily seen by a casual glance. The pin is also oval, instead of round, and it is made to fit tightly. It will be seen that, when this pin is rocked or tilted, the beam is moved, carrying one scale pan up and the other down. The top of the column is of considerable size, and one side of it is cut away to admit of a bevel gear, which also has an oval hole the same as the beam. When the balance is put together and the beam is placed in position, the oval pin passes through the bevel gear and the beam, forming a horizontal shaft. This vertical wheel meshes with a horizontal gear wheel, which is also secured in the head of the pedestal. A shaft runs through it to the space below the floor, where it terminates in a lever secured at right angles. The magician's assistant, under the stage, grasps the lever, and, pulling it back and forth, transmits a seesaw motion to the beam through the medium of the shaft, the two bevel gears, and the oval pin.

The trick depends very largely for success upon the apparent willingness of the prestidigitator to allow all parts of the apparatus to be examined, and, as the gear wheels are very cleverly concealed, there is almost no chance of the trick being discovered.

The Desolation of Cromer.

The recent landslip at Cromer, England, is only the last of a long series of catastrophes which during the past thousand years have buried more than a mile of land in the sea. One looks in vain for any mention of Cromer in Doomsday Book. It was then but a hamlet of the town of Shipden. But Shipden has lain now for many years at the bottom of the sea. At the beginning of this century it was still possible to discern the masonry of its church at low water. In those days Cromer was an inland town. But in 1837 an extraordinary gale drove the sea to such a height that the very existence of the town was in peril for many hours. Since then a breakwater has been constructed to protect the town. The neighborhood, however, is gradually disappearing. At Sheringham a frigate drawing 20 feet of water can now ride at anchor where forty years ago there was a cliff 50 feet high. It has been found necessary to move various buildings inland. A lighthouse was built in 1719 several hundred yards inland, but in little more than a century this lighthouse had to be abandoned, owing to encroachment, and a new one built still farther away. The Cromer cliffs are very sandy, and are especially exposed to the action of the sea, as they encounter the full force of the drift from the northeast.—*Westminster Gazette*.

Russia in Central Asia.

A Russian vice-consulate has been established at Seistan, in the frontier sphere which Great Britain created between her protectorates of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Persia, something like a quarter of a century since, which leads the *National Zeitung* (Berlin) to give expression, editorially, to the following:

"Russia, which already has her claws around the Afghan city of Herat, is now stretching out her feelers further south against the outposts of the Anglo-Indian dominion. The Czar is preparing to send out a 'scientific' exploring expedition under Prof. Soroki, of Kazan, to Lake Lob Nor, in Chinese Turkestan, which, owing to the insecurity of the country, will require a by no means inconsiderable escort of Cossacks. This will probably turn out to be another of those numerous 'scientific' expeditions which Russia has been in the habit of sending to Central Asia of late years, to pave the way for annexation. The speech made the other day by the new governor-general of Turkestan to the Mohammedan notables of Tashkend, after the suppression of the revolt in Ferghana, ran as follows:

"Be assured that all the Mohammedans here, taken together, form but an unimportant and imperceptible part of the millions of Russia. The great Czar has such a number of faithful servants, and his brave army is so large, that, if necessary, he can within a week or two bring men enough here to quarter a whole battalion in every village. The people must, therefore, remain peaceful and quiet. And what would you gain by hostility? The Czar has bestowed full liberty and the possibility of living according to their religion on all his faithful subjects, including the Mussulmans here."

Ivory Veneers.

Veneer cutting has reached such perfection that a single elephant's tusk 30 inches long is now cut in London into a sheet of ivory 150 inches long and 20 inches wide, and some sheets of rosewood and mahogany are only about a fiftieth of an inch thick.