CURRENT TOPICS.

THE question of burning coal in a wet or dry state is still being discussed in the English journals, a large amount of both theory and practical information being set forth. One writer says that, although it is generally conceded to be true that wet bituminous coal will not produce as large a quantity of steam in a boiler as dry coal, there are few figures to substantiate this. The results of a series of tests, made recently with much care, are regarded as having considerable weight in the determination of the points involved. It appeared that a mass of washed slack holding eighteen per cent. of water and nine and nine-tenths per cent. of ash evaporated five and seven-tenths pounds of water per pound of fuel, while the same coal, with only three per cent. of water, made from eight to eight and five-tenths pounds of steam, making due allowance for moisture by reducing to a standard of like quantities of coal free from moisture, a direct loss of fourteen per cent. is shown in using wet coal.

ACCORDING to the *British Medical Journal*, "surgeons now have the high authority of Dr. Ferrier to encourage them in untried efforts for the cure of cerebral disease by operation." Dr. Ferrier said, before the Royal Chirurgical Society, that physicians would not be justified in advising surgical operations upon the brain until the principles and practice of regional disease had been as clearly established as possible, but thought it doubtful that any reason now remains why a surgeon should not open the cranial cavity. He had seen complete recovery repeatedly follow some of the most formidable operations upon the brain of animals of delicate and almost human organization. Secondary inflammation can be absolutely prevented, and there is no risk of life from even extensive destruction of the cerebral hemispheres.

THOSE who are alarming themselves and their neighbors by dreadful pictures of the Mahdi in full march on Cairo and Alexandria will do well to note that M. de Lesseps, who knows something about Egypt, entirely scouts the idea that the Nile delta is in any danger. "If the Mahdi attempted to cross the desert," said M. de Lesseps, "his army would lose all cohesion. If unopposed he might get to the confines of Upper Egypt, but with an army that would be the source of its own destruction. Artillery would then finish it." To this the Pall Mall *Budget* adds the obvious consideration that the Mahdi would have the very greatest difficulty in inducing any of his tribes to follow him so far north. It is one thing to punish the stealers of your cows and another to undertake the conquest of the world.

ACCORDING to the *Gazz. Med. Ital. Venele*, Prof. Silvestrini has made a series of experiments to ascertain if the miasm of malaria really exists, as is generally supposed, in the dew and the soil. He collected soil and dew from notoriously unwholesome places and injected infusions of them under his skin, having first ascertained that they held various forms of sporiferous and other bacilli. No evil results were experienced. He tried similar experiments on his wife, and he and his friends made fifty-two experiments with dew and infusions of soil collected from many places. All of them proved innocuous. The Professor denies, therefore, that a primitive infection is the cause of malaria fevers.

MR. WALTER VAUGHAN is the defendant in a suit for abandonment brought by Miss Anna Higbie, of Flatbush, Long Island who alleges that she was married to Walter not long ago at a sociable, and that he refuses to regard her as his wife. To this Walter replies that his love-making was "taffy," the ceremony a mock one, and that his marriage was "all for fun." It seems to have been a sportive joke, but the man who looks upon matrimony as funny ought to be taught a lesson and should be compelled to marry the young lady "for keeps," anyhow. One remarkable feature of the trial is the confession of wholesale kissing and hugging by the girls of the congregation to which the parties belonged. No entertainment was regarded as completed until all the pretty girls in the church had been kissed and hugged by one or more of the "boys."

MR. WILLIAM BLAIKIE, author of "How to Get Strong" and other hygienic manuals of importance, expresses his conviction that, so far as the taking of bodily exercise goes, Mr. Gladstone is the ideal man, the Premier's practice being in winter to walk an hour daily out-doors, and in summer to chop down trees an hour daily. Mr. Blaikie has long maintained that in hot weather a properly cared for person should feel as vigorous as in cold weather, and should eat as much and drink as much, the fluid, of course, being non-alcoholic. Race horses, he says, do their best when the mercury is in the nineties.

LORD ROSSMORE, whose commission as a Justice of the Peace has lately been suspended on account of the part he played in an Orange demonstration in Ireland and over whom such a hubbub has been raised, succeeded a brother killed by a steeplechase accident. He is 30, and married to the daughter and coheiress of a Mr. Naylor, formerly a banker at Liverpool and immensely rich. He is an English as well as Irish Peer.

IT is one of the distinguishing merits of the sons of Queen Victoria (observes the London *Standard*) that they have been trained to understand that this is a work-a-day world, in which every good citizen finds his special share of duty allotted to him, or speedily discovers for himself some useful and honorable task. Upon the heir to the throne naturally devolves much of those social duties which people unfamiliar with them call pleasures, and cynics prefer to describe as frivolities. The keen professional interest exhibited by the Duke of Edinburgh in the navy is known to every one; and in the Duke of Connaught the crown has contributed a thorough soldier in the English army.

JOHN BRIGHT makes notes and headings of his speeches, and with great care writes down and commits to memory all the important passages. Gladstone merely jots down facts and figures, and for expression trusts entirely to the moment. The late Lord Derby, the "Rupert of Debate," wrote down every word and committed his speeches to memory. In one of his letters he says that all his principal speeches cost him two sleepless nights—one in thinking what he would say, and the other in lamenting that he might have said it better. Thiers was equally precise. O Connell and Gambetta spoke always on the inspiration of the moment.

ACCORDING to Rabbi Sonneschein, of St. Louis, the American Jew can keep Christmas without in the least violating his religious convictions. The rabbi says that the 25th of December was celebrated by the pagan world as the time when the longest night gives way to the lengthening of the day, and that the early Christian Church, which had originally celebrated the natal day of its founder in the spring, accepted at the end of the fifth century the pagan festival, transferring its celebration of Christ's birth to December. Moreover the Maccabean priests instituted a festival on the 25th of Kisler, the corresponding Jewish month, to take the place of this pagan feast, when they had by defeating the Syrian King driven out Greek idolatry.

THOUGH marriages between Jews and Christians are not tolerated in Russia, marriages of Christian men to converted Jewesses and of Christian women to converted Jews are, by a droll piece of legislation, especially encouraged. Marriage for the fourth time is, in a general way, illegal. But a thrice married man or woman enterprising enough to stand a fourth time the hazard of the altar may do so on accepting as a matrimonial partner a convert from the Jewish faith.

Chat for the Ladies.

Cynical Spanish proverb: "A woman's tears cost little, but bring her much!"

The course of true love often runs smooth until it is wrecked by the wife's misplaced switch.

Six ladies have graduated with honor in England at the London College of Chemistry, and mean to begin life as druggists.

Women never will be paid as much for lecturing as men, simply because they have done so much of it for nothing.

"Now, children," she continued, "what is the meal you eat in the morning called?" "Oatmeal," promptly replied a member of the class.

Miss Kate Kane, who threw the water into a Milwaukee judge's face, has gone to Chicago, where there is less water around to tempt her to similar indiscretions.

"Of course," said Mrs. Rubric, "our rector conducts the service in English; but then it is just as grand and inspiring as Latin; you can't understand a word he says, you know."

GIVE HIM A LIFT.

Give him a lift Kneel not in prayer,
Nor moralize with his despair!
The man is down, and his great need
Is ready help, not prayer and creed.

'Tis time when the wounds are washed and healed
That the inward motive be revealed;
But now, whate'er the spirit be,
Mere words are but a mockery.

One grain of aid just now is more
To him than tomes of saintly lore;
If you must pray, pray in your heart,
But give him a lift! pray give him a start

The world is full of good advice—
Of prayers, of praise, of preaching nice;
But the generous souls who aid mankind
Are scarce as gold, and hard to find.

Give like a Christian—speak in deeds;
A noble life's the best of creeds;
And he shall wear a noble crown
Who gives men a lift when they are down.

He rang the door bell of a banker. The servant tells him "Monsieur does not receive to-day." "That makes nothing to me. My racket is to know if he will give anything."

It is cowardice that prompts us when we seek to cast upon others the burdens we ought to bear ourselves; and it is a false philosophy that tries to save the wrong doer from the punishment due to his evil deeds.

A reverend doctor, introducing to an audience a famous missionary from India concluded his remarks with this impressive sentence: "He comes to you from that land where every prospect pleases, *and only man is vile.*"

A week ago Victor Josephus and other boys threw eggs at Dr. Hughes, at Annapolis, Ill. Hughes met Josephus on the street on Friday and shot him dead without a word of warning.

"Do you believe in woman's rights?" she demanded, jabbing him in the ribs with her umbrella. "Yes," he replied, as he moved to a safe distance, "I believe in woman's funeral rites.

At an excursion to Arran of the British Association, the members were ferried from the steamer to the shore, at Brodick, in boat loads. A popular clergyman, noted for his obesity, had got into one of the boats, and a reverend brother seemed reluctant to follow, lest the boat should be overloaded. "Come away," said he in the boat, "there is still room for you and no danger, provided you have none of your sermons in your cket."

The workmen of the Edgar Thomson Steel Company at Pittsburg, Pa., have accepted a reduction of 13 per cent. in their wages in preference to remaining idle. Steady work is promised 3,000 men throughout the winter. It is believed the same result will be brought about in all the steel rail mills in America.

It is intended by the friends of disestablishment in England and Scotland to make vigorous efforts during the present winter to push their principles both in and out of Parliament. In Wales the cry for disestablishment has become loud and fierce. A monster meeting in favor of disestablishment has just been held at Carnarvon. Three separate measures—one for England, one for Scotland and one for Wales—are to be introduced during the coming session of Parliament.

WEALTH AND BEAUTY.

A Brilliant Assemblage at the Mansion of the Railway King.

DRESSES WORN AT VANDERBILT'S BALL

The amount of capital represented at the great ball given by W. H. Vanderbilt, the New York railway king, in his Fifth avenue mansion, on Tuesday night, was $500,000,000 at least. The residence was beautifully decorated; 10,000 roses and a large variety of other flowers were used. The dresses of the ladies were magnificent. Many of the fair guests, besides wearing great clusters of flowers on their waists, carried several large bouquets. These were mostly of solid colors. Most of the debutantes carried bouquets of white roses surrounded by the delicate tendrils of the maiden-hair fern. Indeed, these ferns were much used in all the bouquets. Pink roses were among the most used, and the hybrid roses, with their brilliant coloring and crumpled leaves, were also favorites. One young lady carried a bouquet of violets and clusters of the same sweet flower looped the folds of her tulle dress, which was unusually pretty and youthful in effect. Among the brilliant costumes were the following:

Mrs. W. H. Vanderbilt's costume, made by Worth for the occasion, was a marvellous combination of satin and brocade made with train and square neck and trimmed with point lace. Her ornaments were diamonds and consisted of necklace, with pendant, earrings, bracelets and pins, while a tiara of the same gems were worn in the coiffure, holding in place a cluster of ostrich tips. Mrs. Seward Webb was attired in a dress with court train of red satin, brocaded in gold and front of gold-colored satin veiled in point applique lace. The corsage was cut low and her ornaments were diamonds. She carried a bouquet of yellow roses, lilies and red carnations. Mrs. Wm. Sloane wore white. The train was of satin, brocaded in silver, and the front was of plain satin covered with ruffles of dainty lace. The bodice was decollete, and she wore diamond jewels. Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt's becoming toilet was of cream-colored brocade and satin, trimmed with duchesse lace, and her ornaments were diamonds. Mrs. I. N. Phelps appeared in an elaborate toilet with train brocaded in a design of velvet feathers on a silver ground. The front was covered with an embroidery of gray beads and marabout feathers. The bodice was cut low and her ornaments were diamonds. Miss Fanny Swan wore white silk *en traine*, with front draped with silver-embroidered tulle. The corsage was cut square and had sleeves of the tulle, and she wore a cluster of white ostrich tips and carried a bouquet of pink roses. Miss Leavitt wore white tulle over silk *en traine*, looped with clusters of daisies and grasses. The bodice was low and sleeveless. Miss Emma Leavitt, the young lady in honor of whose entree into society the large reception was given yesterday, was attired in white tulle over silk, trimmed with marabout feathers and white lilacs. The skirt was made with long train and the corsage was decollete. She carried a bouquet of white lilacs. Mrs. Marshall O. Roberts wore a most elaborate toilet. The long court train of white satin was lined with plush, and the drapery of handsome point-applique lace fell in front over an embroidery of chenille and pearls. The bodice was low and sleeveless and her ornaments were magnificent diamonds. Mrs. William Wetmore wore white satin *en traine* with front covered with crystal embroidery and trimmed with feathers. The corsage was cut V shape, both back and front, and trimmed with crystal and pearl fringe. She wore diamond jewels and carried a bouquet of Pride of Devonshire roses. Miss Roosevelt wore white silver embroidered tulle over silk *en traine*, with corsage cut low and sleeves of lace. Her ornaments were pearls. Mrs. Bishop was dressed in a rich black toilet. The train of satin was very long, and the whole was trimmed profusely with jet passementerie. The corsage was cut square, and had sleeves of lace. Her jewels were diamonds. Miss Sand's dress of white gauze, embroidered in gold and pink chenille over pink satin, was trimmed with gold bullion fringe and made with low neck. Miss Varnum wore white satin, over which fell a drapery of tulle caught up with marabout feathers and white lilacs. She carried a bouquet of white lilacs. She wore pearl jewels.

Bro. Gardner's Philosophy.

"It doan' look 'zactly right fur one man to have a big brick house an' anoder man a rough bo'd shanty, but 'long 'bout tax time de man in de shanty kin sit on de fence an' chuckle over de luck dat he aint rich.

"It doan' look 'zactly right to see one man go pushin' an' swellin' an' crowdin' everybody else off de sidewalk to let de pub lic know dat he am a king bee, but such men have to carry de anxiety of bein' in debt to de tailor an' of dodgin' de grocer an' of subscribin' $25 to build a church without a hope of bein' able to pay 10 cents on de dollar.

"In fack, my friends, dar am heaps an' heaps o' things dat doan' look 'zactly right to us at fust glance, but when ye come to figger it up an' divide an' subtract we've all got a heap to be thankful fur an' to encourage us to git up airly in de mawnin'. A man kin brace his legs an' lay back like a mule, an' kick away at de hull world, an' hate everybody an' be hated in return, or he kin pick up sartin crumbs o' consolashun inter a seat in de back eand of de wagin, an' take a heap o' comfort, knowin' dat somebody is wuss off dan himself. Let us accumulate to bizness."—*Detroit Free Press.*

Lord Eskdale, grandson of the Duke of Buccleuch, who owns nearly all Dumfriesshire, is the Conservative candidate for that county. It was his father whom Mr. Gladstone defeated in Midlothian.

Jennie Adler, a Dayton Jewess, returning from a visit to New York, met a New Orleans merchant named Meyer on the train. They were mutually smitten. He popped and she said "y-e-s," and within half an hour after arriving in the Dayton depot they were man and wife.

Pennsylvania iron workers at Lancaster, Pa., have shut down until after the holidays. The suspension will probably be permanent, as the men refuse to accept a reduction of wages.

FASTING FOR FOUR YEARS.

Remarkable Experience of a Connecticut Woman—Living on the Juice of Oranges.

In a cosy little cottage overlooking the Quinnipiac river on Pine street, New Haven, lives Mrs. John L. Evarts, a lady who, it is asserted, has virtually eaten nothing for four years. During this time she has subsisted wholly—so her friends say—on the juices of fruit taken in such scanty quantities as to be almost inappreciable. The juice of a single orange has served the purpose of food for days. Eminent physicians have studied the case and have all alike been puzzled and routed in their efforts to master it. That the story of her wonderful fast is true nobody knowing Mrs. Evarts questions. Her own reputation and the character of the friends who surround her dispose of any suggestions of trick or humbug which the cynical might seek to interpose.

And yet the appearance of the lady does not lend much plausibility to the idea that she has suffered through any loss of appetite. When met by a reporter of the *Morning News* at her door, yesterday, it was with difficulty that he could believe that he stood in the presence of one who had tasted no substantial food for fifty months. She was the picture of health. Slightly past middle age, she seemed indeed a fine specimen of the rugged, old-fashioned New England woman, used to out-door exercise, and younger in reality than the average woman a half-score years her junior. Her eye sparkled and the flush on her cheek seemed the tint of perfect health. Her manner was bright and pleasant. Though averse to discussing her remarkable experiences, and feeling a dread of newspaper mention, she finally consented to tell something of the strange story.

"Four years ago," said Mrs. Evarts, "I visited friends at Portland, Me. While there I suffered from a severe cough of which I was unable to rid myself. I consulted physicians in Portland and took many kinds of medicine, but all to no effect. One spring day the cough left me as suddenly as it had come upon me a few months before. Soon subsequently I began to suffer from severe pains in the stomach. Plasters were applied and other remedies sought in vain. I became unable to eat anything. The bare taste of food subjected me to nausea. In this condition I returned to New Haven. The best medical aid was procured for me, and under the advice of my physicians I used to drive daily to a slaughter-house and drink warm blood. For a time this seemed to help me, though I was still continually affected with nausea and was unable to eat anything substantial whatever."

"Up to the time you were attacked in Maine had you been in good health?" asked the visitor.

"Oh, yes. I had not known really what sickness meant; and my appetite had always been excellent; in fact, I never missed a meal or failed to do my full duty at the table morning, noon, or night. After my return the sickness began to develop which has had me in its clutches ever since. The doctors, one after another, have tried to fathom the mystery, but all have been defeated, it seems. Some have treated me for cancer of the stomach, and others have supposed the trouble to be from an internal ulcer. For fifteen months I suffered indescribable tortures, and was kept almost constantly under the influence of chloroform. Ether had no effect whatever upon me, and the only nourishment I took in all this time was a little brandy and ice. Suddenly I grew better and stronger, but my appetite showed no signs of returning."

"It seems strange that you could have continued alive?"

"Yes, almost a miracle. For months the church bells did not ring, the vibrations affecting me so that I was again and again taken with cramps that doubled my body into most painful shapes. A celebrated physician of Philadelphia heard of my case and came to see me, and attended me for some time, but his labors were unavailing. There seemed no remedy and no skill equal to the demands of the case, and I have continued until the present with no return of appetite and subject to nervous prostration."

"And all this time you have eaten no meat and no pastry of any kind?" the reporter asked.

"None whatever, not a single morsel," was the response. "My physicians and friends will all tell you this. Twice in this time I have been hungry. It was terrible, and I can not begin to tell you what I was obliged to suffer. I did not dare eat anything, and at the same time my cravings were such that when I saw a little dog running in the street I felt as if I could eat every particle of flesh upon it. I go out to ride nearly every day, and consider myself a well woman with the exception that I partake of no substantial food, and never sit at a table except for sociability."

"What keeps you alive?"

"My only subsistence is fruit; not fruit eaten as other people eat fruit. I can swallow none of the substantial portions. It is only the juice that I dare take—all that I want to take. This only for the past four years has been my entire nourishment, except that occasionally I allow a little loaf sugar to melt in my mouth. The odor of cooking in the house has not the least effect upon me."

Mrs. Evarts smiled as she bade her caller good-by, and lovingly fondled the rich yellow orange she held in her hand.—*New Haven (Conn.) News.*

A $16,000 Ram.

At Melbourne last September a ram, which has been described in the English papers as "a true bred merino," sold for 3,150 guineas. The animal was really a Lincoln, as he descends from a long-woolled ram which was purchased out of the famous Biscathorpe flock in 1874 for 200 guineas, and which sold in Australia a few months later for 1,200 guineas.

The clergymen of Indianapolis have formally recommended that funeral services shall be performed on secular days in private dwellings, and not in the houses of worship; that the friends shall take leave of the dead in private; that the remains shall not be exhibited to the public, and that, with a view to reducing the burden of expense, the services shall be on one day and the burial privately performed on the next.

Squandered Blessings.

If we consume all and save nothing we must surely come to the end of our resources by-and-by. This principle does not apply only to our worldly means. We have to husband our working powers and the brain power whence they spring, as we have to husband everything else we possess; and to eat up in a short time what ought to last for all our life is bad management and the end will assuredly prove ill evil. We may do the same thing with friendship. We can eat up a friendship as we can eat up everything else, and leave ourselves no crumbs to go on with, out of all that large cake that once was ours. If we throw too much on our friends, make too many demands on their sympathy, their patience, their good nature, their allowance, their generosity, we shall end by eating up in a short time the cake of love that should have lasted us to the end. Many a friend has been squandered in this manner by excess of demand, and many a love has followed suit. By the folly of jealousy which, once a stimulant, becomes at last a poison; by the folly of display which, once a delicious kind of enchantment, becomes at last an oppressive nightmare; by the folly of that uneasy need of perpetual assurance which, once gladly responded to as the sign of delightful vitality, becomes at last a tyranny too onerous to be borne; by all these absurdities and extravagances is the food of love devoured and destroyed, and the cake which should have lasted for a lifetime eaten and done with before half the journey had been gone through. We eat our cake too greedily, too inconsiderately. When it is gone we sit down and cry, and wonder how it has come about that we have nothing left to go on with. If we had husbanded our resources they would have lasted; it was our excess which left us poor so soon, as many broken-hearted people find out when too late. If we are wise, we will make some calculation in our life, and say what we shall spend now and what we shall keep for the future.

Methodist Missions.

The fifty-ninth annual report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada has just been published. Among the largest contributors to mission funds are: Messrs. J. M. Treble, Toronto, $300; John Macdonald, Toronto, $680; Dr. W. T. Aikins, Toronto, $200; the Hudson's Bay Company, $486; Dennis Moore, Hamilton, $600; Hon. James Ferrier, Montreal, $700; W. E. Sanford, Hamilton, $600; Mrs. Eliza Scott, Montreal, $500; Geo. H. Starr, Halifax, $750; Jairus Hart, Halifax, $500; James Esterbrook, Exeter, $400.

Mission Work in Formosa.

Some years ago Formosa commanded the attention of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Rev. G. L. Mackay was induced to settle there. Mr. Mackay has since been joined by some able colleagues. Under their judicious management the mission has greatly prospered. For some time the work was uphill; but latterly the missionaries begin to see the fruits of their labors. Some time ago Mr. Mackay wrote, saying that all of a sudden a change became visible. The Sunday meetings and the week-day schools began to be largely attended. In a recent communication he claims that in one section in the north of the island some two thousand persons have flung away their idols; and he specially mentions one village of 200 inhabitants, "every soul clamoring for instruction in Christianity and every house cleared of idols." Cases such as this keep alive the faith in Christian missions.

Other Church Notes.

Rev. Joshua Mosball, rector of Grace Episcopal Church on City Island, N.Y., fell dead in his pulpit as he was about to open the services on Sunday evening.

Rev. Dr. King said in his sermon at New York that Christian communism was the remedy for the increasing accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few men and the corresponding increase of pauperism.

Mind and Matter.

A Professor of the Texas University was explaining to the class his views on mind and matter.

"Now," said he, "there is no doubt that mind existed a long time before matter, and yet, mind can hardly be said to have existence, in the proper sense of the word. I refer to this chair, or to my body as a thing of existence positive, because I feel it; I know it is there and can be seen. But, in reference to my mind——"

"That is non-existent," broke in a student, anticipating the professor.—*Siftings.*

Affairs in Tonquin.

The French force in Tonquin is to be raised to 16,000 men by reinforcements as quickly as possible. Six thousand men have landed and encamped within seven miles of Sontay without molestation or firing a shot. The assault on the town was to have been commenced on the 12th inst., so that some decided news may be looked for shortly, as the Marquis Tseng in an interview at Paris emphatically declared that China would immediately break off official relations with France should she take possession of either Sontay or Bacninh

A certain old borderer, on being complimented by a divine on the strength of his memory, replied, "No, sir, I have no command of my memory. It only retains what hits my fancy; and probably, sir, if you were to preach to me for two hours, I would not be able, when you finished, to remember a word you had been saying."

A little girl's mother told her if she went out of the gate she would have to whip her, and in an hour the young one was picked up in the gutter, in the midst of mud-pie making. "I thought I told you if you went out that gate I'd whip you," said the mother, angrily. "But I didn't do out de date, mamma," replied the child, in a whimper. "Yes, you did, and you've been out there in the street for an hour, and look like a pig." "But, mamma, I didn't do out de date." "Yes, you did, too, and I'm going to whip you." "I didn't do out de date; I tlum over 'e fence, an' oo tan't whip me 'is time, mamma."

The family that has three children and only three bedrooms in the house never causes the death of any of their relatives by putting them in the Arctic "spare bedroom" when the latter make a visit during the winter—and either freeze to death or contract a cold which proves fatal in a few months.