CURRENT TOPICS.

Dr. John Lord came to the defence of Thomas Carlyle the other night in Association Hall, New York. He said that he was Dr. Johnson, Diogenes and Jeremiah rolled into one.

Inventors are not a little interested in the French prize of $10,000, instituted by the decree of June 11th, 1882, in favor of the discovery of any process which shall enable electricity to be applied economically in one of the following directions, as already published, viz: As a source of heat, of light, of chemical action, of mechanical power, as a means of the transmission of intelligence or of the treatment of disease.

The number of French-speaking inhabitants in British North America is 1,298,929, of whom 1,073,820 are in the Province of Quebec, 102,743 in Ontario, 56 635 in New Brunswick, 41,219 in Nova Scotia, 10,751 in Prince Edward Island, 9,949 in Manitoba, 2,896 in the Territories, and 916 in British Columbia. The French population in the Province of Quebec increases, while the English-speaking population is decreasing

During the late excavations undertaken in the Roman Forum, there has been found a pot containing 800 old Anglo-Saxon coins of the time of Pope Marinus II. (882 884). They are of English coinage and rare value, most of them showing heads of the English Kings of the period, and one having the head of an Archbishop of Canterbury. The probabilities are that the money belonged to the Saxon school then in Rome, the existence of which renders it probable that there were many Englishmen in Rome in those days.

The Sultan of Turkey, not content with borrowing from day to day to defray the daily expenses of his palace at ruinously usurious rates, and in the face of a deficit of £6,000,000 in a budget of £12 000 000, has just increased his Grand Vizier's salary from £250 to £750 per month, and that of all the other Ministers from £200 to £300 per month. Thus the Prime Minister of the poorest and most hopelessly bankrupt state in Europe receives £4 000 per annum more than the Prime Minister of England.

The *Canada Presbyterian* feels annoyed because so much money is spent in litigation and politics and so little is given to the Church. It exclaims: "Talk about agnosticism, and Darwin and Huxley! One so called Christian man who unwillingly pays his share of enormous law expenses to keep up an election fight, and growls and grumbles every time he has to pay a dollar for Church purposes, does religion more harm in his neighborhood than all the agnostics on earth.

El Mahdi is not running the present war solely for the advancement of his faith. Not long ago he captured four priests and five nuns, and now he asks £2,000 ransom before he will give them up. If this scheme succeeds, there is no reason why the False Prophet should not amass a very comfortable fortune. At any rate, the ransom business is to be preferred to the almanac business that engages the attention of other false prophets.

A new element in incombustibility in the construction of a building is found in the use of cork bricks. This new material was exhibited at the Nuremberg Exposition, where it attracted much attention. These bricks have not only been largely used for building purposes on account of their lightness and isolating properties, but they are also employed as a covering for steam boilers, and are said to excel even asbestos in preventing the radiation of heat. They are represented as being very cheap, being prepared by the use of small corks, refuse and isolating cement. The usual size of the brick is 10 x 4 34 x 2.12 inches.

The last British census reveals the encouraging fact that the proportion of the blind to the population has decreased with each enumeration since 1851, in which year account of them was taken for the first time. The decrease in the decade ending in 1881 was much greater than in either of the preceding decennial intervals, the number of cases returned on this latter occasion being 22,832, equal to one blind in every 1,138. This decrease is fairly attributable to the progressive improvement in the surgical treatment of affections of the eye, and to the diminished prevalence amongst children of smallpox.

By the statistical report of the last German census, the Protestants number 28,331,152; Catholics, 16,232,651; other Christians, 78,031; Israelites, 561,612; persons of other religions, 366; persons of no distinct confession, 3,138; and finally, those without any specification as to their confession, 27,111. For the whole empire the proportion of the sexes in every 1,000 inhabitants was 490 males and 510 females; for Prussia alone, 492 males and 508 females. Of the males, 13,767,052 were single, 7,670,931 married, 626,634 widowers, and 20,916 divorced; of the women, 13,985 324 were single, 7,705,754 married, 1,916,245 widows, and 41,305 divorced.

A young lady recently addressed a letter to Ruskin on the subject of art training. Desirous of becoming an artist, and wishing good advice, she thought she could do no better than apply to so high an authority. The reply was characteristic and rather disappointing. The great critic, without giving her any hint as to the right course to pursue, told her "It would be better to write less and cultivate a good and beautiful handwriting. No one who writes as you do could make a good artist." It took five people to decipher the hieroglyphics in which Ruskin clothed these few words. The young lady framed this curious production and hung it in her studio.

An English publisher, calling attention to the fact that during the year 1883 349 works of fiction were published in England, says that readers do not increase in proportion to the number of novels published. On the contrary, during the last two or three years the number of readers of circulating library novels has been steadily and largely decreasing. This, he says, is probably to be accounted for mainly by the excess of fiction in other directions. Novel readers who used to resort to the libraries now get their full supply in the daily, weekly, and monthly journals. It is said that for every novel printed and published, probably ten are written and rejected. Thus, then, one has to contemplate over 3,000 novels being written in one year, of which 350 see the light, and of these only about 120 pay the expenses of production, the whole of the remaining mass of writing and printing being labor lost.

In his last published essay Mr. Herbert Spencer shows that those who think that science is dissipating religious beliefs and sentiments seem unaware that whatever of mystery is taken from the old interpretation is added to the new. From the very beginning the progress of knowledge has been accompanied by an increasing capacity for wonder. The lowest savages are the least surprised when shown remarkable products of civilized art. It is not the rustic nor the artisan, nor the trader, who sees anything more than a mere matter of course in the hatching of a chick, but it is the biologist. Hereafter, as heretofore, higher faculty and deeper insight will raise rather than lower the sentiment of wonder; and amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.

Those who have never seen the much talked of dynamite explosive will be interested to know that it looks very much like moist brown sugar. Nitro-glycerine, which is formed by the action of nitric acid upon glycerine, at a low temperature, is the active agent in dynamite, but is mixed with some absorbent substance to render it safer to handle than the liquid glycerine. The absorbent material thus used is a silicious earth—a fine white powder composed of the remains of infusoria, and resembling powdered chalk; this takes up two or three times its weight of the nitro-glycerine, without becoming pasty, and the ingredients are easily mixed, leaden vessels and wooden spoons being used to avoid dangerous friction. When flame is applied to this mass it burns with a strong flame, without any explosion; but when ignited with a detonating fuse, or even by a sudden blow, its explosive force is tremendous.

Mummies at the British Museum.

The removal to South Kensington of the gorillas, birds of paradise and other objects in natural history, which were formerly so attractive to the gaze of holiday visitors, leaves the mummies without a rival in popular estimation. The room to which they have been recently removed has been newly decorated and is admirably suited to their display, as well as of the collection of coffins arranged round the walls. Among these is one which was formerly in the possession of the celebrated Nell Gwynne and which has suffered some in former times from unskilful restorers. Here, too, is what remains of the reputed mummy of the great King Menkaura or Mencheres, whose antiquity is, according to some Egyptologists, so remote as to render modern much of what is usually known as ancient history. Close at hand also may be seen a skull, which on high authority has been identified as belonging to one of the veritable pyramid builders. It was found in the quarries near the pyramids. In addition to many other objects connected with Egyptian burial the cases in this room contain many of the curious jars, with heads of deities on their covers, in which certain portions of the body were placed when the process of embalming was carried out. And there is also a large number of the small statuettes deposited with the mummy and representing the soul of the deceased. In adjoining rooms, on the other side, are many objects of interest connected with daily life of the ancient Egyptians, and specimens of linen of the age of the Ptolemies. On the other side is a room now containing antiquities from Assyria and Babylonia; and here are placed, in a much better position for view than formerly, the bronze gates of Shalmaneser, discovered by Mr. Rassam, and now forming one of the most valued relics in the museum. The rearrangement of the collection has been proceeding under the direction of the distinguished Egyptologist, Dr. S. Birch, keeper of Oriental antiquities, assisted by Mr. E. A. Budge, of Christ's College, Cambridge.—*London News.*

The Joys of Coasting.

Did you ever stand near a hill in winter and watch the boys coasting and not wish that you were a boy again just for an hour? How jolly a crowd of coasters always are! Every boy seems to have an idea that he must talk and shout or something will burst, and they all try to do it at once. The keen fresh air and invigorating exercise make the lungs demand exercise, and nature asserts her sway by making the boys exercise their lungs by shouting and talking. See the laughing, sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks of the youngsters. Fun? Was there ever a place on this earth where a boy gets more fun than while coasting? Why, a boy will get more fun out of sliding down a steep hill on a barrel stave, if he can't get a sled, than he could at almost any other sport. It don't seem right to prohibit the sport. We must not forget that we were boys, and as boys had our fun. It might be a good idea, however, to use the middle of certain streets for coasting and let the fact be generally known, so that there can be no reasonable excuse for accidents to people crossing those streets.

Mrs. James Thornton, of Penacook N. H., met her death the other day in a strange manner. While eating cloves one became lodged in her throat and could not be removed. The next day she was seized with a fit of violent spasms, in one of which she died. Ladies whose husbands insist on going out between the acts should preserve this for future use.

A mechanic in a Johnstown, Pa., iron foundry was recently killed by the contact of a steel hook which he held in his hand with an electric wire.

ST. VALENTINE.

Cupid's Love Tokens, Artistic and Comical—Custom of Choosing Valentines.

The valentine trade is unusually large this year. Some of the exhibits are rich with art industry, and there are the comical souvenirs daintily constructed, and a few of the grotesque. Why such a profusion of valentines—costly, medium and cheap? The fact is that leap year has arrived, a time when Ladye Faire can "pop the question" if she pleases, and of course they will avail themselves of the excellent opportunity offered by St. Valentine's love missives. Be this the true explanation or not, there are for sale millions of valentines. Among the costly kind are instances of reckless extravagance—yes, reckless, because $100 can be better laid out than in the purchase of a souvenir made of lace, a bit of embroidery, a scrap of hand painting and satin plaitings, all combined to make a flimsy yet artistic token of love, which, however is no doubt quite as lasting as the majority of love's flames. A few of the expensive valentines are really artistic and well worth having; for example, on a rich piece of ivory-tinted satin are exquisitely painted a cluster of violet queens, the shades varying from a deep to a light mauve, and just across the right hand upper corner is a charming quotation from Butler:

——what can earth produce but love
To represent the joys above?

In the left hand corner is a ribbon bow in which is concealed a diamond stud, suitable for a lady or a gentleman.

EMBROIDERED ON WHITE SILK.

A valentine embroidered on white velvet is a wonderful work of art. The design is a floral wreath. Every bud and blossom is wrought in relief. In script are the words "I love but thee." The "box valentines," hand painted, have some novel features and were never before brought out in such an elaborate fashion. The boxes are of rich plush, scarlet, azure blue, emerald green, orange yellow and golden bronze, and are lined with satin of a contrasting shade, on a dainty quilted cushion rests a painting on wax—in all instances a work of art. Under the miniature picture the recipient may possibly discover a jewel souvenir, in addition to the original purchase, which is, however, wholly optional with the giver. Another dainty style of valentine, and one that is highly ornamental too, on tinted satin in double-cord fashion, are verses and painted designs or embroidery *vis a vis.*

PRIZE DESIGNS.

There are numerous card-painted valentines, some of which are beautifully executed. A number are prize designs. Of these but little can be said that is not due to works of less pretensions. Many of the designs and their execution are really praiseworthy, and yet they are not "prize" cards. Among the comical valentines there are some that are very ordinary and have more of a woebegone expression than one of humor. Other subjects, however, are more or less funny. Those gotten up in ridicule of the æsthetics—one such, painted on satin cardboard, shows a tall gentleman, "fat as a match," bent forward, holding a sunflower in his hand; his clothes are of a "skin-tight" fit. He is teaching a stout woman how to gracefully pose while standing on one foot. The verse beneath explains the situation of things:

Pose, Valentine, love
I can't; it's no go.
Try, Valentine, love.
Not for the angels above.

VALENTINE CHOOSING.

History informs us that the celebration of St. Valentine's birthday, February 14th, had its origin in the church at the time the good man was "canonized," and as St. Valentine was noted for his kindness to the poor, they commemorated the anniversary of his birthday sending presents to friends, and those gifts were called valentines. Another account, equally reliable to the above statement, records that it was once the custom on the eve of February 14th, for young men and maidens to put a number of the women's names into a box and then each one of the men drew therefrom, the name chosen was then termed his valentine for the time being. Saint Valentine was beheaded in Rome A. D. 270. By some historians he is said to have been a bishop. Other writers declare him to have been a Presbyter. All agree, however, that he was a remarkably good man.

Hot Dinners for School Children.

The *People's Journal*, published in Dundee, Scotland, has an interesting article on an experiment being tried in the rural schools within its district, which consists in providing a warm dinner for the children during school hours. The experience of the pupils there is so similar to those in Canada that the bulk of them have to travel several miles to the school-house, and during the noon hour the youngsters who, if healthy, are usually the owners of a good appetite, have to content themselves with a cold snack or a bannock washed down with cold milk or water, and by the time they return to their homes are oftentimes hungrier than wolves, and also weakened by the effects of fasting and fatigue. In the article stated a number of cases are given, one of which will answer, that of the Maryton School, where the charge is a halfpenny per day for one child and a penny for more than one of the same family. The money paid by the scholars is supplemented by collections made at lectures given in the school houses and from other sources, and with the proceeds beef is bought and a woman employed at ninepence per day to cook and serve, with the result that about 60 children are supplied during the three winter months with a plate of warm, wholesome broth, potato soup, or pea soup, each child also receiving a small portion of meat. The vegetables are supplied gratis by the farmers, and the School Board pays for the fuel and, it is presumed, cooking utensils. Care is taken not to foster the idea that it is the duty of the School Board to feed as well as educate the children. Dr. J. A. Campbell, the member for the Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, speaks highly of the system and its effects, and all acquainted with it confess to its benefits upon the children

What's the extreme penalty for bigamy? Two mothers-in-law

Mrs. Strong was the first cotton raiser in California, and last year she produced 190 bales.

IN THE JAWS OF A SHARK.

Marvellous Experience of Alfetto While Working at His Calling of Diver.

Alfetto, the Spanish diver, who has been at work on the wreck of the Atlanta, near Morehead, thus speaks of an adventure had by him a few days ago: At the time I was at the bottom of the sea. I was just about to signal to be drawn up for a moment's rest, when I noticed a shadowy body moving at some distance above me and toward me. In a moment every fish had disappeared—the very crustaceans lay still upon the sand and the cuttle-fish scurried away as fast as they could. I was not thinking of danger, and my first thought was that it was the shadow of a passing boat. But suddenly a feeling of terror seized me. I felt impelled to flee from something I knew not what. A vague horror seemed grasping after me, such as a child fancies when leaving a darkened room. By this time the shadow had come nearer and taken shape. It scarcely needed a glance to show me that it was a man-eater, and of the largest size. Had I signalled to be drawn up then it would have been certain death. All I could do was to remain still until it left. It lay off twenty or twenty-five feet, just outside the rigging of the ship, its body motionless, its fins barely stirring the water about its gills. It was a monster as it was, but to add to the horror the pressure of water upon my head made it appear as if pouring flames from its eyes and mouth, and every movement of its fins and tail seemed accompanied by a display of fireworks. I was sure the fish was thirty feet long, and so near that I could see its double row of white teeth. Involuntarily I shrunk closer to the side of the vessel. But my first movement betrayed my presence. I saw the shining eyes fixed upon me; its tail quivered as it darted at me like a streak of light. I shrank closer to the side of the ship. I saw it turn on one side, its mouth open, and heard the teeth snap as it darted by me. It had missed me, but only for a moment. The sweep of its mighty tail had thrown me forward. I saw it turn, balance itself, and its tail quivered as it darted at me again. There was no escape. It turned on its back as it swooped down on me like a hawk on a sparrow. The jaws opened and the long, shining teeth grated as they closed on my metal harness. It had me. I could feel its teeth grinding on my copper breastplate as it tried to bite me in two, for, fortunately, it had caught me just across the middle, where I was best protected. Having seized me it went tearing through the water. I could feel it bound forward at each stroke of its tail. Had it not been for my copper helmet my head would have been torn off by the rush through the water. I was perfectly conscious, but somehow I felt no terror at all. There was only a feeling of numbness. I wondered how long it would be before those teeth would crunch through and whether they would strike first into my back or my breast. Then I thought of Maggie and the baby, and wondered who would take care of them and if she would ever know what had become of me. All these thoughts passed through my brain in an instant, but in that time the connecting air tube had been snapped and my head seemed ready to burst with pressure, while the monster's teeth kept crunching and grinding away upon my harness. Then I felt the cold water begin to pour in and heard the bubble, bubble, bubble, as the air escaped into the creature's mouth. I began to hear great guns and see fireworks and rainbows and sunshine and all kinds of pretty things then I thought I was floating away on a rosy summer cloud, dreaming to the sounds of sweet music. Then all became blank. The shark might have eaten me at his leisure and I never would have been the wiser. Imagine my astonishment then when I opened my eyes on board this boat and saw you fellows around me. Yes, sir, I thought I was dead and ate up, sure. Alfetto was found by his comrades a few minutes after the snapping of the line. He was picked up insensible, with several holes punched in the metallic part of the diving suit.—*Panama Herald.*

Extraordinary Case of Suspended Animation.

An extraordinary case of revival of vitality in a supposed dead person has just occurred at Leeds, Eng. The person who has been the subject of this experience is a girl of 16, named Emma Whitehead. The girl had been suffering from consumption for some time, and she gradually sank until about 4 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, when she appeared to breathe her last. No sign of life could be detected, and a person was called in to wash and lay out the body, which was done. Later the undertaker was sent for, and the measurements taken for the coffin, and other arrangements were made for the interment. Late the same night, whilst the mother and the nurse were in the kitchen, they were thrown into violent consternation by hearing a voice cry feebly, "Mother," and summoning courage to ascend the stairs, they found the supposed dead girl standing in the doorway of her bed-room, dressed as she had been laid out. On seeing them she said, "Oh, mother, fetch me down, I feel so cold." Without telling her what had happened, the women persuaded her to return to bed, and at once summoned Dr. Higgins, who applied restoratives to the fainting girl. She soon recovered consciousness, and has not had any relapse; but she is in an exceedingly weak condition, which renders her recovery highly improbable.—*Bristol (Eng.) Times.*

Hints to the Fashionable.

Very long gloves of undressed black kid, with black dresses, or of gray shades with light dresses, straw-colored white, golden crust, or pearl, are the correct wear.

New lunch and breakfast cloths, with napkins to match, come in squares of white or tinted damask, with bright-colored or vari-colored borders and knotted fringes.

English women have begun to adopt a fashion introduced by a graceful Spaniard at a recent reception in London—a kid-embroidered jacket, matching the exact shade of the velvet skirt.

In Paris long carriage visites of pure green and pure brown shades are embroidered all over in colors, presenting a most rich and sumptuous appearance.

A douillette of white ribbed velvet, trimmed with white swans' down, marabout or chenille, is the fashionable wrap for little children of 2 and 3 years old.

A NIGHT OF AGONY.

The Remarkable Experience of an English Traveller.

The following "true tale" was recently told by the Mayor of Stratford-on-Avon when delivering a lecture on "Forest and Historic Trees." Some years ago a gentleman, mounted on a horse, set out in order to cross the Dartmoor. Though the thaw had commenced, yet it had not melted the snow-heaps, and our traveller got on but slowly, and toward evening it froze again. The shades of evening came on with vapor and mist. To reach Tavistock that night he knew would be impossible, as a fresh snow storm began to fall. To stay out all night would be certain death. It was, therefore, with no small satisfaction that he saw at a distance a cottage, partially covered with snow, and it was not long before he reached it. He dismounted, and the door was opened by an old woman. He entered, and saw a sturdy peasant, the woman's son, who sat smoking his pipe beside a blazing peat fire. The stranger's wants were soon made known; an old outhouse accommodated his horse, and the son gave up his bed, adding that he would sleep in the old settle by the chimney corner After supper he was shown to his room, where there was a large oak chest, very old and curious, so much so as to cause him to remark upon it to the old woman, who had lighted him upstairs, and he could not help observing something shy and odd about her manner. After she had gone he felt inclined to peep into the chest, but he forbore, and went to bed. He felt cold and miserable, and could not sleep. The old chest haunted him; a hollow sound, as if behind his bed's head, suddenly startled him, and as he raised himself in his bed, the first thing he saw was the chest. There it lay in the silvery silence of the moonlight; his fears gave action to the inanimate thing and at length he fancied the lid of the chest began to move. Starting from his bed, he grasped the lid and raised it up. Imagine his feelings of horror when he beheld a human corpse, stiff and cold. One thought during the rest of the night possessed him—that he was in the house of murderers! There was no escape. He thanked God when morning came. On coming down stairs he found the old woman and her son preparing breakfast. They hoped "his honor" had passed a good night, and bade him eat his breakfast, consisting of broiled bacon, the son chiming in "that mother was reckoned a good un at salting un in." He enjoyed his breakfast, and recovered his fright, and just as the old woman was broiling him another rasher he summoned up courage to disclose the secret of the oak chest, and asked for an explanation. "Bless your heart, your honor, it's nothing at all," said the young man: "it's only fayther!" "Father! Your father!" cried the traveller; "what do you mean?" "Why, you see, your honor, the snow being so thick, and the roads so cledgey like, when old fayther died two weeks agone, we couldn't carry un to Tavistock to bury un, so mother put un in the old box, and salted un in." The traveller's breakfast was spoiled. He got up from the table, paid for his lodging, saddled his horse, and has never been known to touch a rasher of bacon since, as it always recalled the feelings of disgust connected with the adventure of "salting un in."—*Manchester (Eng.) Times.*

Advice Worth Heeding.

Keep your head cool, your feet warm, and subscribe for your local newspaper.

Don't spend more than you can borrow, and don't borrow more than you can pay promptly.

Don't kindle the fire with kerosene unless you are prepared for a land that is fairer than this.

If you are angry at a man count fifty before speaking; if he is a great deal bigger than you are count four hundred and sixty.

Don't blow in your gun to see if it is loaded, unless you want to get your name in the papers and your family is well provided for.

Be satisfied with the world as you find it, remembering that you are only a tenant here and may not find yourself as well suited when you move.

Love your neighbor. If he keeps a dog that howls at the moon do not make harsh remarks about him, but borrow the dog to go hunting and forget to bring him back again.

Don't brag about the achievements of your ancestor. A great ancestor in the grave is poor capital of itself for a man to go into business on. And besides, our ancestors had their faults. Even Adam's record is not as clean as we would like it to be.

Decline of French Population.

If all the blessings of life came to that nation which has a stationary or decreasing population, what a happy country France ought to be! According to the returns of vital statistics for 1882 recently published it would seem that France is rapidly reaching the condition in which the births are only just sufficient to supply the waste caused by death. In 1882, as compared with 1881, there were 10,000 more deaths and 1,500 fewer marriages. Sixty years ago, under the restoration, France would have doubled its population in 112 years; at the present rate the doubling would occupy 267 years, but for the steady immigration of an enormous body of foreigners into the country every year. This is a state of affairs which ought to bring comfort to our Malthusians who, no doubt, will be able to demonstrate to us that there is no such thing as discomfort or distress in a country existing under such sound economical conditions. It does not seem to be regarded with quite so much complacency by French statesmen and statisticians; who are asking themselves, with some anxiety, what is likely to happen when the population of France, even with the addition of a few millions of Germans, Italians, and Belgians, will be rather less than half that of Germany.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

Mrs. Rebecca R. Pomeroy, who died in Newton, Mass., a few days ago, was one of the famous nurses of the war. She has left behind her an interesting volume of personal experiences in the hospitals of the South and as the nurse of Lincoln's son "Tad" when he was sick at the White House.