INTERESTING ITEMS.

Volumes in the British Museum—Doctors in Great Britain—An Old Student—Home Lessons for Children—Etc., etc.

A cremation society has been organized in Boston.

The latest return of the number of volumes in the British Museum is just over 2,000,000. There are 160 miles of shelves, and about twenty more miles to be filled. It is calculated that about one ton of literature a day is sent into that institution.

The Texas *Courier-Record of Medicine* says that a certain elderly colored women has "a habit of chewing pins as a solace for trouble." The occasional swallowing of one of them does not appear to be attended with danger.

"Will you have an orange or a fig?" inquired Dr. Jackson of a fine little boy somewhat under the weather. "A fig," answered the child with alacrity. "No fever there," said the doctor, "or he would certainly have said an orange."

The *Gazette Medicale de l'Algerie* calls attention to a great number of facts which appear to show that cider drinkers are not troubled with stone, and that patients having this affection are either cured or greatly relieved by that beverage.

The *British Medical Journal* says that it is very easy to find organisms in any disease if the proper methods of preparation be observed, but it is very much more difficult, and far more important, to establish that there is any connection between the organism and the disease.

An elderly Englishman was in the habit of buying quicksilver and aqua fortis in separate packages and mixing them into a sort of ointment for rheumatism. On one occasion, however, they were put into the same bottle by the druggist. They exploded in the purchaser's pocket, burning him so that he died.

According to the new British Medical Directory the whole number of doctors in Great Britain is 25,038. Of these 4,417 are in London, 11,775 on the provincial list, 2,436 in Scotland, 2,430 in Ireland, 1,717 reside abroad, and 2,493 are in the army and navy, the Indian medical service, and the mercantile marine.

Dr. Gross is quoted in the Philadelphia *Clinical Record* as saying that if the brain is penetrated by a ball, the rule to let it alone is an exceedingly bad one; investigation has shown that the brain can be handled to a considerable extent with impunity, and there is a great future for operations within the cranial cavity.

The following notes of a speech recently delivered in Dublin are not without interest. Speaking on the much-vexed Irish land question, the speaker said: "The country is overrun by absentee landlords," and, after a magnificent peroration, delivered from the tub on which he was standing, he said: "I tell you the cup of old Ireland's misery is overflowing; aye, and it's not full yet."

It is just one mile between Sault St. Marie, Mich., and the Canadian village opposite, yet mail communication between the two points occupied ten days. A letter posted on the American side goes first to Detroit, crosses to Windsor, where it enters the Canadian mails, and is then sent over the Canadian route back to the Sault, reaching the Canadian office there in ten days from the time it started.

A curious fete is to be held at Pompeii at the beginning of May. The first day it is supposed there is a visit of the Emperor of Rome to Pompeii; there will be circus games, chariot races, a procession, and a number of shops will be decked out as they would have appeared 1,800 years ago. On the second day there will be a marriage and a funeral, with their respective rites. The third day are promised gladiatorial games and a gladiatorial fete.

The Polish newspaper *Kri* (Border Land) states that there is at present in the medical faculty of the University of Kharkoff a first year's student, named Dzeetchakovski, whose age is 60 years. In 1863 he was a third-year student of the medical course at the University of Warsaw, but as he took part in the then Polish insurrection, he was exiled to Siberia, and remained there till, in accordance with the imperial coronation manifesto of last year, he, in common with other Poles, was allowed to return to Europe.

A new fashion has found favor in certain Parisian drawing rooms. As the guests arrive, in response to an invitation for a *soiree dansante*, they are met at the door by a young lady who gives a small bouquet to each person, and insists that the flower shall be attached to the buttonhole of the gentleman or the corsage of the lady. Each gentleman is then expected to seek out the lady who wears a nosegay similar in every respect to his own, and he thereupon, after the customary salutations, becomes her partner for the rest of the evening. This compulsory coupling, when skilfully organized, favors many intrigues, promotes match making, and affords a good opportunity for the display of spite by bringing unsympathetic persons together.

In support of a resolution passed at a popular meeting in Bradford, England, that home lessons should not be compulsory on children under 10 years, Dr. Rabagliati stated that in the last decade deaths from hydrocephalus at the school ages had increased 20 per cent. This he believed must in part be attributed to educational overpressure. He also pointed out that cerebral disease had increased in the same period by nearly 50 per cent. While he did not think this could be attributed to the same cause, he begged the School Board to take care lest, by forced study, an additional impetus might be given to the causes which were powerfully increasing the mortality from nervous disorder.

In France there are now 4,575 miles of navigable rivers and 2,900 miles of canals. In the year 1852 there were only 4,190 miles of river navigable and 2,440 miles of canals, the increase in the length of rivers being 385 miles and in that of canals 460 miles. But this increase has been effected at an enormous expense, the total amount spent from 1852 up to the year 1878 being close upon $70,000,000, while since then, under the scheme of M. de Freycinet for the development of communication by land or water, a further sum of $55,000,000 has already been spent. Thus in round figures the cost since 1852 has been $125,000,000, and yet the quantity of goods carried by water has only increased 4,000,000 tons.

ANTE-BELLUM DAYS.

A Reminiscence of Old Times on the Mississippi River—A Thrilling Incident in the Life of the Famous James Bowie—A Duel on Deck

In ante-bellum times nowhere on the continent were more exciting scenes witnessed than in the cabins of some of the Mississippi river steamers, and of these none were more dramatic and tragical than the following incident. Gambling, ofttimes for the highest stakes, was universal, particularly on the New Orleans packets, and professional gamblers frequently made these boats their homes. Much has been already written concerning the lives and characters concerning these men, and many are the incidents related in which they bore conspicuous, if not always honorable, parts. Among the various gambling scenes that have occurred on western and southern rivers, there is one which should not be forgotten, the more so that one of the principal actors in the event is known throughout the country to have been a man of tried bravery and courage, and his name, James Bowie, is always associated with the idea of reckless fearlessness.

In a recent conversation with an old steamboat man, a *Republican* reporter learned of the following, which occurred on board the steamer Orleans, Capt. Davis—father of Capt. John B. Davis, late of the Diamond Jolline—master, in the fall of 1832. At that time the river steamers were beginning to be infested with organized gangs of gamblers, which in a few years embraced in its ranks as allies and confederates many of the bar-keepers and other officers of the boats of higher rank, and with their assistance and connivance, many a planter was robbed of his all and driven to suicide or murder.

In the fall of the year the merchants and planters of the country along the lower river went east to purchase goods or to collect the proceeds of the years' crop of cotton or sugar, and their arrival at and departure from New York were carefully noted by emissaries of the gamblers. If it was known that they carried back to the west or south any large amount of money, they were watched, and an efficient gang of sharps was placed upon their tracks.

In the summer of 1835, a young gentleman of Natchez, who had just been married, made an extended wedding trip to the north, and on his way back home had stopped in New York to collect a number of bills which had been entrusted to him for collection by planters at and near Natchez, and the amount in the aggregate was quite large.

Shortly after his arrival in New York the young man was spotted and his acquaintance made by several of the gambling fraternity, but, though they tried hard to do so, they failed to inveigle him into any of their dens. When he had transacted his business there, the young man started for home with his wife, but knowing of his probable route a well-organized gang started ahead of him, leaving two of the fraternity to accompany their intended victim and keep him in sight.

Learning at Pittsburg that he would take a steamer for Louisville, where he would remain a few days and then take one of the New Orleans packets for Natchez, they joined him on the boat; and on the trip to Louisville card-playing was introduced to wile away the time. Having been allowed to win small sums, by the time they had reached Louisville the victim imagined he knew all about the game. This game, which at the time referred to was very much in vogue, was called a twenty-card poker, and was played with the tens, jacks, and queens, kings, and aces of the pack, and as but four could play at a time, the game was admirably adapted for what is known to the gaming fraternity as "three pluck one."

After a pleasant visit in Louisville the young man took passage on the steamer Orleans for Natchez. The gentleman's cabin, where all the card-playing was done, was on the main deck, directly under the ladies' cabin. Instead of the round wheel houses now seen, the Orleans' were square, flat on top, and came up to within two feet of the hurricane deck, and the distance between them was about thirty-five feet. Not long after leaving Louisville card-playing was resumed, and so effectually had the gamblers carried out their scheme that they had won nearly all their victim's money before reaching Vicksburg and had intended to complete their work before Natchez was reached, a comparatively easy task, as he was drunk and desperate. A few miles above Vicksburg a tall, straight, and dignified gentleman, having much the appearance of a preacher, got aboard the boat, and in a few minutes took a seat near the gamblers, where he could see all that was going on. Several times during the continuance of the game, and after the tall stranger had come aboard, the young wife of the gamblers' victim had besought him to leave their company, but in vain, so deep was the infatuation of the game and so strong his belief that he could yet win back the money which he had lost. Play continued into the night, and by 1 o'clock in the morning his money was all won from him, and, rendered desperate by the knowledge that he had been recreant to the trust reposed to him, the victim rose from his seat and rushed wildly to the side of the boat, intent upon self-destruction, but just as he was in the act of springing overboard he was seized by a grip of iron and held, and, his young wife appearing at the time, he was taken to his room by the stranger, who assured her that all would be right if she would only keep her husband in the room until his return.

Returning to the cabin, where the gamblers and their friends were standing around the bar drinking, the stranger drew out of his pockets a well-filled wallet, and taking out of it a $100 bank-note, asked the barkeeper to change it for him. This the barkeeper could not do, but referred him to the principal gambler, saying: "This gentleman can change it for you." "Oh, yes," he answered at once, "won't you take a drink?" Thanking him, the stranger accepted the invitation, and while the change was being made just touched his glass to his lips. The gamblers had all seen the well-filled wallet, and as the stranger casually remarked that he stopped at Natchez, they determined to try to catch and fleece him. One of them remarked that he did not care to go bed, and proposed that another game be played, to which, of course, the others agaeed, but, as there were three of them who understood the game and it required four to play it, the stranger was invited to join them, which, after a little hesitation on his part, he assented to.

The game began by the stranger being allowed to win several large bets, but he kept his eyes open, and, although they did not know it, he was perfectly aware of what was going on. After playing for about an hour, and just as day was breaking, the gamblers concluded to finish by giving the stranger a hand which would induce him to bet largely, and as there were three of them, and he could not tell, they felt certain they could make him put up all he had before they would allow him to have a show.

Everything worked as they had anticipated, the man opposite the stranger dealt the cards, and the man on the right went $10 blind; the ante was $5. When the cards were dealt, the stranger put up $20, and the next man did the same, when the dealer raised him $20, putting up $40. When it came to the turn of the one who had made the blind he put up $130, thus raising it $100. The stranger quietly put up the requisite amount, and when the next man bet $100 more, the next man, the dealer, then threw up his hand and drew out. The two remaining gamblers then kept raising the bet whenever it came their turn, the stranger coolly putting up whatever sum was necessary, until the the total amount on the table was $100,000, of which the stranger had contributed one third. While the betting was going on the stranger had kept his eyes on the dealer, and had, by his watchfulness, prevented any changing of the cards. Toward the last he saw a card slipped by the dealer to the man who had made the blind, when seizing his wrist with one hand, he drew a murderous-looking knife with the other, and forced the gambler to lay his cards on the table face down. All sprang to their feet, and the stranger quietly said that when that hand was raised and it should be found to contain six cards, he would kill the owner; telling the other to show his cards, he threw down his own hand, which consisted of four kings and a ten spot.

The baffled gambler, livid with rage and disappointment, swore that the stranger should fight him, demanding, with an oath, to know who he was anyway. Quietly, and as if in the presence of ladies, the stranger answered, "James Bowie."

At the sound of that name two of the gamblers quailed, for they knew that the man who bore that name was a terror to even the bravest, but the third, who had never heard of "James Bowie," demanded a a duel at once. This was acceded to at once by Bowie, with a smile; pistols—derringers—were the weapons selected, the hurricane-roof the place, and the time at once. Sweeping the whole of the money into his hat, Bowie went to the room where the unhappy wife sat guarding her husband's uneasy slumbers, and, rapping on the door, he handed her, when she had opened it, the hat and its contents, telling her that, if he did not come, two-thirds of the money was her husband's, and the balance his own.

Ascending to the hurricane-roof the principals were placed one upon the top of each wheel house. This brought them about twelve yards apart, and each was exposed to the other from the knee up. The pistols were handed to them, and the gambler's second gave the word, "one, two, three, fire, stop," uttered at intervals of one second each, and they were allowed to fire at any time between the utterance of the words one and stop.

As "one" rang out on the clear morning air both raised their weapons, as "three" was heard the gambler's pistol rang out, and before the sound had ceased, and while the word "fire" was being uttered, Bowie's pistol sounded, and simultaneous with this sound, the gambler fell, and giving a convulsive struggle, rolled off the wheel-house into the river.

Bowie coolly blew the smoke out of his pistol, shut down the pan (the flint-lock was in use at the time) and going down into the ladies' cabin, obtained his hat and divided the money which it contained into three portions. Two of these he gave to the young wife and the other he kept, as it was his own money. Having awakened her husband, the fond wife showed him the money and told him all she knew about the affair, not having heard of the duel. When the husband became acquainted with all the facts his gratitude to his benefactor was deep and lasting.

Not desiring to be made a hero of, Bowie, when the boat reached Rodney, determined to go ashore, and as he was leaving the boat both the husband and wife clung to him as though he was a father leaving them. It was afterward ascertained that the amount which Bowie returned to the wife was within less than $100 of the sum which the gamblers had won from her husband.

Bismarck, D.T., need not change its name. D. T. can stand for darned tyrant.

A Philadelphia reporter is an applicant for the position of Chief of Police of that city, but he won't get it. Reporters have been known to catch criminals.

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As they were trudging along to school, a five-year-old Boston miss said to her companion, a lad of six summers, "Were you ever affrightened at the contiguity of a rodent?" "Nay, forsooth," he replied. "I fear not the juxtaposition of the creature, but dislike its tendency to an intimate propinquity."

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A. P. 173.

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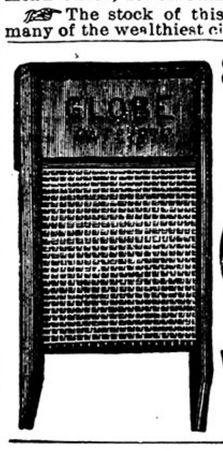

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