Evening Telegraph

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THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1866.

Is the Constitution a Perfect Instrument? It is assumed in some quarters to be a very grave error to attempt to amend the Constitution of the United States. We are assured quite confidently of the entire perfection of that venerable instrument. We are told, with a gre t deal of impressive head-shaking, that it is the height of presumption for the statesmen of the present day to suppose themselves wise enough to "amend" the work of their ancestors, and that the attempt to do so involves a most shocking disrespect to their august memory.

All this would be very sound if it were not so excessively absurd. If our forefathers supposed they had made so perfect an instrument as we are told the Constitution 1s-one so exactly adapted to every possible emergency which might or may ever arise in the nation's history -the question very naturally arises, why did they so carefully provide the ways and means for its amendment? Why did they not make it like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, which change not? And if the instrument as it came from their hands was so entirely unimprovable, how did it happen that so many very important amendments to it were so soon found pecessary to be made?

The truth is, the men who made our Constitu tion were wise in their day and according to the lights they had, but wisdom had been in the world before their time, and it did not die with them. The Government they founted was purely experimental. They had few precedents to guide them, and almost no lights from experience. They could only balance probabilities for the future. Not being omniscient, they could not foresee all the exigencies that might arise in the hfe of the nation, and they could not tell how their complex scheme of government might be tound to work as to all its parts in practice. They were filled with confidence in the great principles of a republican form of government, and had enunclated those principles with remarkable vigor and clearness in the Declaration of Independence, but they were not able to give them full effect and application in the form of government they adopted. They were in the midst of conflicting elements and interests, and had to do not ideally or really the best thing, but the best thing practical to be done at that time. They saw and were perfectly conscious of the weakness and imperfection of much of their work. They never thought of arrogating perfection for it. They saw that the Constitution would need amendments, and they left the door wide open for them. They trusted something to the wisdom and patriotism of those who should come after them.

But we are told that for a long time this nation has lived under the present Constitution without amendment, and has grown and prospered exceedingly; and therefore no amendments can of song. The system of amateur operas, although now be necessary. We can remember when a similar argument was used in favor of the perpetuation of slavery. We were told that slavery had existed from the foundation of the Government, and that we had grown to greatness and power in its presence. So, too, it used to be a stock argument with the Democrats that they, as a party, bad been in power much of the time during the nation's history, and the nation had been prosperous and happy; ergo, the reign of the Democratic party was a good thing.

It might well be replied to this style of argument, that facts may be coincident without standing in the relation of cause and effect. We all remember the story of the "old ancient man" who thought that the sands which gradually obstructed the entrance to Goodwin Harbor were caused by Tenterden steeple, because previous to the erection of that steeple the harbor was unobstructed; but the old man's logic has not generally been deemed of the most convincing and luminous order. The nation may have grown and prospered, not by virtue of, but in spile of pseudo democracy and slavery. So, too with regard to the weak points of the Constitution-we have lived in spite of them, not because of them.

This argument, too, might very justly be retorted upon its authors. "Behold," we might say, "our nation is not yet a hundred years old -a mere hand's breadth in the life of a peopleand see to what the errors in its Constitution have brought us! A horrid civil war, causing the sacrifice of a million lives and of thousands of millions of money."

There are many points which the Constitution leaves vague, that time and experience have shown ought to be settled. It is sufficient to instance the question of secession. We may now consider that question as settled by the arbitrament of war, it is true; but who shall say that if it had been as clearly settled in the Constitution itself, we might not have been saved so costly a method of determining it?

The rights of citizens, as citizens of the United States, under the Constitution, are lett very vague. According to one construction, a man may be a citizen of the United States, bound to render it service and allegiance, and yet the general Government may not protect him in the enjoyment of his most sacred rights. He may have ex-reised the right of suffrage for years, voting for President and Vice-President, and members of the House of Representatives, and yet by simply moving to another part of the country may and himself perpetually disfranchised, merely on account of some physical characte: istic.

The basis of representation, as originally fixed in the Constitution, is now found to work very gross injustice, giving to each Southern voter about two and one-half times as much power as to a Northern voter. The unjust disfranchisement of one portion of the citizens is made to put aristocratic power in the hands of those perpetrating the wrong. A premium is thus offered for a violation of one of the essential principles of our form of government.

The whole subject of rebellion and attempted revolution, the status of States that have re-

volted and been subdued, the entire group of difficult yet most important questions which are now agitating the polities of the country. is left untouched by the Constitution, except as matters of inference from its more general provisions.

There are numerous other points which might be suggested, and which must have occurred to every reflecting mind, where the Constitution is weak, and might be profitably amended. We have not space, however, to dwell upon them. We have instanced enough to show that those who desire its amendment are not to be put down by the cry that the Constitution is perfect, much less by the charge of showing disrespect to the memory of its framers. The fact that those who attempt to forestall action by such considerations as these are a class of politicians who uniformly interpret the Constitution in the interests of injustice and in equality, instead of liberty and fraternity, is an additional rea on why their interested remonstrances should have but slight weight with iberal minds.

The Future of Music in America. IT is a curious fact that disaster has the power of at once opening the eyes of a community to all the defects of one who has fallen into ruin. It is singular how carefully the peccadilloes committed by a bankrupt are remembered and recalled. All his evil qualities are magnified, as viewed through the glasses of failure. What is true in the case of an individua', has also proved itself applicable so far as a building is concerned-As long as the New York Academy of Music stood, so long were its merits dilated upon, and comparison drawn between it and the Royal Opera House at Berlin, to the total ignoring of such a building as the Academy in our city. In a list, recently published in the New York papers, of the largest opera houses in the world curs is entirely omitted. Now, however, as fire has destroyed that huge German gingerbread all its defects are acknowledged, its ruin is in. terpreted as a Providential interference, and to the Phonix which will rise from its ashes is predicted a splendor and a perfection which will excel all rivals.

We hope, however, in the new edifice the architect and stockholders will display a little of that taste which the inspection of our Academy would have installed into their minds, If they will have crimson paper, with girt flowers, interspersed with bunches of golden grapes, with blue background, they cannot blame the critical if they do say it looks a little like "shoddy." True, it is suggestive of the wealth which fills its walls, but it is also suggestive of "Miss Kilmansegg and her golden leg," and the penchant that lady had for an unseemly exhibition of her limb. We would also recommend that the plan pursued in the old Academy of placing a statuette on every projection be reformed. It is not a temple of Juggernaut, with effigies of the derty exposed on every side; nor is it a Roman residence, with Lares and Penates as household gods; nor yet is it to rival the cap of Louis XI, with its innumerable images of saints. Neat but not gaudy is a recommendation. Let it be rich and massive, resembling in architecture rather the Gothic arch than the French c pola.

We believe that a new era in the progress of music in America is about to be opened. The New York Academy will call to its walls suffi cient foreign importation of prime donnes, while in our own city we are rapidly taking strides towards a future when we will be inde pendent of the whims of the European queens ridiculed and erided when first originated by Mr. Penelli, has proved so great a success, that we hope ere long to be released from the bondage we are in to vocalists across the water. The plan has been conducted in an unobtrusive style, which has not attracted much attention away from our own city. Philaielphia was never addicted to self-glorification. If New York had had such a troupe as has been given to us " papers would have rung with it, These ration and the whole land would have rung with the great success of an entirely new system. As it is, PERELLI has only sought to raise the art of music and give pleasure, careless o

the vain bombast which New York loves, The same plan is to be pursued in the future. and we hope that it will be the germ from which will spring a race of American prime donnes who will cultivate native art. We do not see why such a scheme might not succeed, if a proper school was afforded, as was designed when our Academy was commenced. When it is accomplished we will have in our possession a mighty lever to advance civilization, for nothing contributes more to a native retinement than familiarity with music and a genuine love of the

The Arrest of the Commander-in-Chief. LATEST advices inform us that the great leader of the Canadian invasion, the designer of the subversion of the British empire, and generalin-chief of that branch of the Brotherhood who seek for blood, was ignominiously arrested in his bed, this morning, by the United States authorities, and held in durance vile. It would be sacrilegious to endeavor to portray the feelings of this heroic chief at such a dastardly indignity.

We are at a loss to understand how the diplomatic Secretary of State would risk an action which might involve us in difficulties with the Irish Republic. With Mexico on our hands, it ill becomes us to-incur the enmity of so powerful and bitter, as well as scientific and strategic a foe jas the sons of the Emerald Isle. However, the deed has been done, and it behooves us as loval cititzens to stand by our Government, and run all the dangers to which she has exposed herself by her indiscretion. It was a bold deed, savoring almost of temerity, yet, as it has been done, we hope it will be followed up by the seizure of JAMES STEPHENS and W. R. Roberts, the one for endeavoring to secure money under talse pretenses, and the other for endeavoring to break the neutrality laws.

It is hardly natural for Irishmen to suppose that the Government would quietly see its treaties violated, and its pledged word broken by them in a wild fiasco. Let Sweener be kept in jail, or admitted to ball on something more than \$500, on his own recognizance. If he and all the leaders are thus disposed of, much life and property will be saved to the American Irishmen, and in giving this advice we only prove ourselves the best friends which the members of the Fenian Brotherhood bave in this country. We give timely counsel, but they will all see ere long, that as we were right in deprecating subscriptions to O'MAHONY bouds, we are also correct in opposing Canadian invasion, and favoring general arrests.

SHALL WE HAVE OVE LOCAL BOOLEVARDS !-GEORGE AUGUSTA SALA has of late been coniributing to the Cornhill Magazine a series of articles on the "Great Streets of the World," in which Paris, London, Berlin, Dresden, Havre, New York, and all the leading municipalities of civilized nations are represented, with the exception of Philadelphia. It would require even more than local partiality and a nice fancy to discover in the city of Brotherly Love any worthy of being noted as the principal street of the town. TROLLOPE compared it to "a vast multiplication table," and we do indeed resemble that object of childhood's dread, in so far as all our thoroughfares running East and West are concerned. Those, however, coming from North to South have one exception, which could be made a rival of the Parisian Boulevard-that exception is Broad street, to be Lincoln avenue. It is the only street in our city which could be made a grand drive and promenade, and on which wealth lavisted would be well employed to beautify our city.

The question, shall we have a street worthy of the second city of America, or shall we still remain without any drive for our citizens, is one. well worthy of the attention of the public. If the upper and lower end of Broad street be improved, and when the three years have elapsed the middle portion receive a proper refitting, we shall soon have long rows of palatial mansions extending for miles on both sides, and presenting a rival to Fifth avenue in cost, and a superior in width and beauty. We would have a magnificent drive from the Delaware, below League Island, to the country around Fisher's lane. It would be a convenience, an ornament, and a pride to our people. The cost of ail the nced ul improvements, as stated before the Special Committee yesterday, would be \$220,000 to the citizens and \$36,000 to the city. Whether it is rais d must rest with those most directly interested, although should they do so, Fhiladel. phia would no longer be deemed unworthy of mention among the cities which had the finest streets of the world.

LEAGUE ISLAND,-The question of the Navy Yard for iron-clads being located at League Island came up yesterday before the House. when Judge Kelley delivered one of his telling speeches in its favor. Hon. CHARLES O'NEILL also followed in an able address. We are sure that the Philaderphia delegation will leave no effort unexerted in order to secure the success of the city. We are only astonished that local prejudice cannot be held subservient to national good, and that our Eastern friends are willing to sacri ce their country to secure a beneat to their neighborhood. They are either acting most selfishly, or else their eyes are so easily blinded by prejudice that they are better sited for the farm than the forum.

DEMOCRATIC SYMPATHY WITH JEFF. DAVIS .-WILLIAM B. REED, in the United States Court at Richmond, the other day, avowed his strong "personal sympathy" with JEFF. DAVIS. The same "sympathy" exists in the bosoms of the other Democratic leaders in this State-HEISTER CLYMER among the rest. They sympathized with JEFF, all through the war; why should they not do so now? They kept up "a fire in the rear" while the Rebels kept up the fire in front. Between them, we lost the lives of three hundred thousand men, loyal, good, and true, Sympathize with Davis? Ot course they do. They are old comrades in the same cause. They would vote for him for President, if they had the chance.

THE GAS INVESTIGATION drags its slow length ong. The Committee met vesterday, examined CHARLES THOMPSON JONES, and declined to join with the special committee of Common Council. The reason for their refusal is that Common Council refused to concur in the appointment of a committee when asked by the Select Council, but immediately appointed a committee of its own, which action is held to be disrespectful to the other Chamber.

-A sensational American is now in Paris, whose profession is that of a face-maker"-in theatrical parlance, a "grame." He places him-self behind a frame hidden with a white cloth, beside a table covered with wigs, faise beards, and paint-brushes. As soon as his tollette is made, he suddenly draws aside the curtain and exhibits to the spectators the head ot Washington, Napoleon, Charles I, Wellington, Louis XI, or that of a madman, an idiot, a fury, a criminal, etc. The principal merit of this curious spectacle is the rapidity with which the artist "changes his head," for each transformation is perfect in its truthful resemblance. As yet he has only exhibited his powers in private, and the Paris public is waiting for him with interest.

-The Empress Eugenie was forty on the 5th of May, and she begins to fade. Her fears at the approach of threatening wrinkles are said to be terrible.

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(See the Second Page for additional Special Notices.) NOTICE.

ADAMS EXPRESS COMPANY. On and after TUESDAY, May 1, the

FREIGHT DEPARTMENT Of this Company will be removed to the Company's New building 5 F cor o LEV 3 1 and Mark of Streets. Entrance on Aleventh street and on Marbie streets. Entrance on Eleventh street and on Marcie street.

211 Money and Collection Business will be transacted as hereto ore at No 220 UH:8. UT Street. Small Parcels and Fachages will be received at eliber office.

Call Locks will be keptative a hoffice, and any calls entered therein previous to 8 P. 38 will receive attantion same day, if within a reasonable distance from our offices. Inquiries for greats and settlements to be mad at No 220 CH:SNU Street.

4 30 4ptm. JOHN BINGHAM, Superintendent.

PHILADELPHIA TEMPERANCE SO-CLETY.—A Stated Monthly Meeting will be held at the Hall of the Young Men & Caristian Association No 1216 CHUNNUT Street on THI (hursday), LYENING, at 80 clock. All triends of the cause are most cordially invited.

11*

J. C. GARRIGUES, Secretary.

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Best French Whalebone Combination Corsets, beautiful shapes, only \$1.75, cheap.

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B ack and white wide Bonnet Ribbon, cheap.
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