Lehigh Register.

A FAMILY NEWSPAPER. FOR FARMER AND MECHANIC.

Devoted to Politics, News, Literature, Poetry, Mechanics, Agriculture, the Diffusion of Useful Information, General Intelligence, Amusement, Markets, &c.

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THE LEHIGH REGISTER

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Poetical Department.

The Dying Year.

His tread is slow and tremulous,
And his head is white with rime;
And his glance has lost the fervor
It wore in the summer time.

The purple grapes have been wrested
From the matted leaves between;
And long since has the sickle
To flash in the grain been seen!

From the shadowy dells come back,
The sound of the thrasher's flail;
And the brown nuts are pattering,
On the fallen leaves, like hail.

Like a dying man with a crime,
Untold in his bosom dark,
The forest trees are streching out
Their branches all dead and stark!

The Indian Summer has woven
A dream of the happy past,
Yet to where lie entomb'd his sires
He knows he is gliding fast!

He knows he is old and feeble,
That his voice has lost its tone,
And that even the wreath of asters,
From his swarthy brow has gone!

And that ere the Christmas carol
Has fully died on his ear,
Old *Janvier* from the icy north
Will lead out the new born year!

Miscellaneous Selections.

Revolution in Agriculture.

Among the new lights which have of late broken in upon the minds of those who lead the van in the science of agriculture, there is none more interesting than that which seems to foreshow the posibility of producing crops without manure. To make dame Nature yield up her bounties with but little artificial assistance has long been among the dreams of philosophers; and now we have indications, that the dreams are to give place to realities. No result could be more opportune, if, as some political economists assert, agriculture affords far greater means and resources for the well-being of a population than trade, especially when made use of in reformatory purposes. The fact, they say, would have been demonstrated long ago if agriculture had only had fair play. Well it has now got fair play, and is finding energy for improvements and experiments, which are gradually leading to a solution of great questions, and to results very different from those imagined by theorists. Let us take a brief survey of the investigations; it is something more than mere dry reading:

Everybody knows that there are fifty five of fifty-six elements which make up the mineral world, and only four of which are concerned in the vegetable world—namely, hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen or ozote.—If we know precisely when, where, and how plants obtain their supply of these elements, our theory of agriculture would remain only the pleasure and profit of reducing it to practice. But we are as yet on the threshold only of the required knowledge. What we do know from recent experiments is, that plants do absorb azote, and largely, from the atmosphere. Priestly said so many years ago: his conclusions, however, were disputed and rejected. As it happens, the productions which yield food to man and fodder to cattle most abundantly are those which come more especially under consideration. Farmers alternate root crops with grain crops, with a view to prevent exhaustion; but this exhaustion as late experience demonstrates, is best prevented by offering all possible facilities for a free and full supply of nitrogen, and from the atmosphere rather than from other sources. Water and air, indeed, play a more important part in agriculture than many who till the soil by mere routine would be willing to believe.—M. Baudrimont, professor of chemistry at the Faculty of Sciences at Bordeaux, has just published a work "On the Existence of interstitial Currents in Arable Soil, and the Influence which they exert on Agriculture," in which, after a long study of the subject, he states that there is a natural process at work by which liquid currents rise to the surface from a certain depth in the ground, and thus bring up materials that help either to maintain its fertility or to modify its character. Many phenomena of agriculture and of vegetation have at different times, been observed, which hitherto inexplicable, are readily explained on this theory. Such, for example, the improvements which take place in fallows; and there is reason to believe that these currents materially influence the rotation of crops.

In Germany, Schleiden is attracting much attention by his masterly views on the phenomena of vegetation; and it will surprise many to here that he admits of no relation between the fertility of a soil and the quantity of fertilizing matters expended upon it. "The goodness of the soil," he says, "depends upon its inorganic constituents, so far at least as they are soluble in water, or through continued action of carbonic acid; and the more abundant and various these solutions, the more fruitful is the ground."

Arguing from this view, it is not richness of soil or humus that produces the multiplied varieties of Alpine plants in Germany, or the absence of it that produces but few. "Soluble mineral constituents" are shown to be the characteristic of our cultivated fields, and "an agricultural plant" is defined as one "distinguished from wild individuals of the same species by peculiar qualities which constitute its fitness for culture, and which depend upon a modification of chemical action." The amazing yield of Indian corn in Mexico—from 200 to 600 fold—is something which, with all our skill, we cannot accomplish, and is a fact in favor of the argument, "that in no case do the organic substances contained in the ground perform any direct part in the nutrition of plants." The annual destruction of organic matter all over the earth is estimated at 145 billions of pounds, equal to 2½ billions of cubic feet; and if all vegetation depends on organic matter for nutrition, to satisfy this consumption "ther must have been, 5,000 years back, ten feet deep of pure organic substance on its surface." Another illustration is furnished by taking the number of caule and other animals in France in a given year, (1844,) and observing the amount of food they consume. The process of nutrition would require 76,789,000,000 pounds of organic matter—six times more than the whole number contributed of organic matter towards reproduction; and in 100 hundred years "the whole organic material of the country would be consumed."

Again: look at a farm. How much more is carried off from it than is given back again: generally the amount of its yield is three times greater than that of the organic matter it receives; while of the manure applied the greater part is not taken up, but imperceptibly decomposed. Carbon in the most important of the constituents of plants; an acre of sugar plantation produces 7,500 pounds of canes, of which 1,200 pounds are carbon; and yet sugar plantations are rarely manured, and then only with the ashes of the burnt canes. With bananas the result is still more striking: the yield is 98,000 pounds of fruit in a year from a single acre and of this 17,000 pounds—more than a fifth—is carbon; and the same acre will give the same return year after year for twenty or thirty years; and the ground at the end of that time will be richer than at the commencement, from nothing more than the decay of the large leaves of the plant. Here in Europe, too, the difference in weight and in carbon between the seed and the produce has often been noted—in wheat, 89 per cent.; in red clover, 158 per cent.; and in peas, 361 per cent. These facts afford evidence of a supply of carbon derived from other sources than those commonly supposed to exist; and while we know that seeds will germinate and become vigorous plants in pure quartzose sand, or in cotton wool, or on a board, we seem to have proof that the chief source of supply is the atmosphere. This is an interesting point, which further research will verify: Schleiden shows the process to be eminently simple. He says in his work, of which a translation has been published by the Horticultural Society: "According to Link, Schwartz, and others, an acre of water-meadows produces 4,400 pounds of hay, which when dry, contains 45.8 per cent. of carbon. The hay then yields 2,000 pounds of carbon, to which 1,000 pounds may be added for the portion of the year in which the grass is not cut, and the roots. To produce these 3,000 pounds of carbon, 10,980 pounds of carbonic acid are requisite, which may be raised to 12,000 pounds, to compensate, for the nightly expiration. Now, Schubler has shown that an acre of so wretched a grass as *poa annua* exhales in 120 days (too low a computation) of active vegetation 6,000,000 pounds of water. To supply the exigencies of the plants therefore, it is only necessary for the meadow to imbibe 3½ grains of carbonic acid with every pound of water."

Mr. Lawes has found, also, that in a plant of any one of our ordinary crops, more than 200 grains of water must pass through it, for a single grain of solid substance to accumulate within it. He states the evaporation from an acre of wheat during the period of its growth to be 114,800 gallons, or 73,510,000 gallons per square mile. With clover, it is rather more; with peas and barley, less.—When we apply these calculations to a county or a kingdom, we are lost in the magnitude of the processes by which nature works; but we see the more clearly that, on such a scale, the quantity of material supplied by the air, though minute to the individual, becomes vast in the aggregate. We see, moreover, the necessity for understanding the relations between evaporation and rate of growth, and the laws and effects of absorption in soils. A thousand pound of dry calcareous sand will gain two pounds in weight in twelve hours when the air is moist, while pure agricultural clay will gain thirty-seven pounds.

The source of nitrogen comes next to be considered; and this also is seen to be independent of manures." Hereupon, it is observed that "our domestic plants do not require a greater supply than in a state of nature. A water-meadow which has never received any dung yields yearly from forty to fifty pounds of nitrogen, while the best plowed land yields only about thirty-one pounds. The plants for which most dung is used, as potatoes and turnips, are, in fact, proportionally the poorest in nitrogen."—That there is a supply independent of the soil, is further seen in the millions of hides furnished every year by the cattle of the Pampas without any diminution of produce; and in the great quantities of nitrogenous matters—hay, butter, and cheese,—carried off from pasture lands, far more than is returned by the animals fed thereon. Experiments with various kinds of plants on various soils have satisfactorily demonstrated that increase of nitrogen in the land and in the crops does take place quite irrespective of supplies of manure.

With respect to ammonia, "it appears that one thirteenth of a grain in every pound of water is sufficient for the exigencies of vegetation, and there is, perhaps, no spring water in the universe which contains so little." Then, as to sulphur and phosphorus, which are also among the constituents of plants, the quantity needed in proportion to the time of vegetation is so small, that one-540,000th of a grain of sulphureted hydrogen per cubic foot diffused through the atmosphere to a height of 3,000 feet is all that is required.

The consideration that cereals would soon disappear from the north of Europe, if not cultivated, and, perhaps, from nearly the whole of this quarter of the globe, adds weight to the arguments in favor of enlightened attention to the inorganic constituents of plants. The point is to bring the soil into harmony with the conditions by which growth may best be promoted. Much depends on the nature of the soil; the darkest colored lands are generally the highest in temperature; hence the advantage of vegetable mould; while deep, light sands, and clay, which turns almost to stone in dry weather, weary and vex the cultivator by their unprofitableness. It is to be remembered, however, that soils which have the highest temperature of their own, may not be those most susceptible of receiving heat—that is, from the sun, because some lands are warmed by the springs that irrigate them. Here we have an explanation of the phenomena of certain soils which are warm in winter and cool in summer. The application of humus evolves heat by the process of combustion; and sand, lime, clay, and humus, are the combinations needed, the clay being in a proportion of from forty to fifty per cent.; if less than ten per cent. the land will be too light and poor.

The Romance of Life Assurance.

A work recently published in London gives an account of various means sometimes resorted to by individuals to unlawfully obtain money from Life Assurance Companies, by false representations concerning the decease of the insured. The two following cases are curious and interesting:

As the evening of an autumnal day began to close, four men might have been seen hiring a boat at one of the numerous stairs below Blackfriar's bridge. Their appearance was that of the middle order, but the reckless daring which characterised their air and manner, marked them of the class which lives by others losses. By the time they had rowed some distance up the river, the only light that guided them was the reflection of the lamps which fringed it, and no sooner were they shrouded by the darkness of the night, than, without any apparent cause, the boat was upset, and the four were precipitated into the Thames. They were close to land, and while they buffeted the tide and made their way, they halloed lustily for help, which, as the shore was now ringing with the noise of boats and boatmen putting off to their assistance, was soon rendered. Of the four who had started only three landed together, and great was their outcry for their lost companion. The alarm was immediately given; all that skill could do to recover their friend was tried, but the night was too dark to render human aid of much avail. It was pitiable to the bystanders to witness the grief of those who were saved, who, finding nothing more could be done, were obliged to content themselves with offering a reward for the body, coupled with a promise to return early in the morning. They then went away, and the scene resumed its ordinary quiet.

A few hours after this, at the dead of night, a second boat, with the same men, pursued its silent and almost solitary course up the river towards the scene of the previous misfortune. With them was a large, suspicious looking bundle, which, when they had arrived at a spot suitable to their purpose, they lifted in their arms, placing their horrible burden—for it was the body of a dead man—where, from their judgment and knowledge of the tide, the corps of their friend would be sought. Favored by darkness and by night, they accomplished their object, again rowing rapidly down the stream to an obscure abode in the neighborhood of Greenwich. When morning began to break, they returned once more to the place which had witnessed their mysterious midnight visit, where, with much apparent anxiety, they asked for tidings of their companion.—The reply was what they expected. A body had been found—it was that which they had placed on the strand—and this they at once identified as that of the friend who had been with them in the boat, and for whom they had offered a reward. A coroner's jury sat upon the remains, a verdict of accidental death was recorded, and the object of the conspirators fairly achieved. That object was to defraud an insurance office of a very large amount—for the missing man had not been drowned; the grief was only simulated; and the body which had been placed on the banks of the Thames had been procured to consummate the deception.

Against a fraud planned with so much art, and carried out with so much skill, no official regulation could guard, and when the papers containing the report of the inquest, and the identity of the body, were forwarded to the representatives of the deceased, not a doubt can be entertained of its justice. It was true that the claimant, under his will, was his mistress; that his executors were the persons who perpetrated the fraud, and were with him at the time of the accident; but there were broad and indisputable facts to be disposed of, that the insured man had met with a sudden and accidental death, and this was attested by the verdict of a jury. The money was paid, and with that portion of it which came to the deceased, he went to Paris. In that gay capital with a mistress as expensive in her habits as himself, the cash was soon spent, and so successful had been the first attempt in this line, that it seemed a pity for a gentleman thus accomplished, to abandon a mine so rich. Very shortly, therefore, after the previous fraud, an application was made from Liverpool to an office in London, to insure the life of a gentleman for £2,000. The applicant was represented as a commercial traveler, and permission was sought to extend the privilege of traveling in America. This insurance was effected, and when only a few months had elapsed, information was received by the company that the insured gentleman, while bathing in one of the great American lakes, had been drowned; that his clothes had been left on the banks of the water where his body had been found; and in verification of this, all the necessary documents were lodged in due time. As the death and identity of the traveler seemed clearly established, the office intimated its readiness to pay the policy at the end of three months; but three months seemed a very long period to those who felt the uncertain tenure by which their claims was held; so, to induce the office to pay ready money, they offered a large and unbusiness like discount. This, together, perhaps, with some suspicions created by the manner of the applicant, placed the office on its guard. Inquiries were soon instituted, and discoveries made which induced them to proceed still further; but no sooner was it found that a close inquisition was being entered on, than the claim was abandoned, and the claimants seen no more at the office.

About 1830, two persons resided in the then obscure suburbs of St. Giles, one of whom was a woman of about twenty, the other a man whose age would have allowed him to be the woman's father. Their position might be characterized by the modern term, "shabby genteel." They kept little company, and little was remarked of them beyond the fact, that the man was tall and military looking, and the woman, though handsome, haughty and frigid. On a sudden the latter was taken ill in the night.—The man procured assistance, and on the arrival of the leech, his daughter was found in agony, and soon became insensible, and died in his presence. The doctor laid his hand on her heart, shook his head, intimating that all was over, and went his way.—The searchers came, and the coffin with its contents was committed to the earth. Immediately after, the bereaved father claimed from the underwriters a sum insured on his daughter's life, and left the place.

No great time had elapsed, when the neighborhood of Queen Square began to shake its head at the rather suspicious connection which existed between one of the inmates of a house in that locality, and a lady who resided with them. The gentleman assumed the title of captain and the style of a macaroni, and visited Ranelagh with the lady, who accompanied him everywhere.—Being apparently wealthy, he attained a certain position—was known as a dabbler in the funds, and was seen occasionally at Lloyd's and Garraway's, chiefly affecting the company of assurers. His house soon became the resort of the young bloods of the day, where, if they lost their money, they were repaid by a glance from the goddess of the place. It was noticed that the master of the house never lost—and no doubt his current expenses were met by his gambling gains. Soon came an alarming interruption to these recreations. Any one who had possessed sufficient discrimination might have recognized in the captain and his inamorata the father and daughter of the suburb of St. Giles. The same mock tragedy was again reacted. The lady was seized with spasms at the heart, which seemed to convulse her frame, and again the man was in the agony of despair. Physicians were sent for in haste; one only arrived in time to see her die; the rest, satisfied that life had fled, took their fees and departed. After a sham funeral, the gallant captain claimed and received from various underwriters, with whom he had assured the life of the lady, sums amounting to many thousand.

A few days later a mature looking personage appeared daily on the commercial walks of Liverpool, in the character of a merchant. Deep in the mysteries of corn and cotton, a constant attender at church, a subscriber to local charities, and a giver of good dinners, he soon became generally respected. The hospitalities of his house were gracefully dispensed by a lady who passed as his niece, and for a time all went on smoothly. At length it became whispered abroad that his speculations were not so successful as usual, and his own admissions gave a sanction to the whisper. It soon became advisable to borrow money on the security of property belonging to his niece.

To do so they must insure their lives for about £2,000. This was easy enough.—Secrecy was necessary for the sake of his credit, and under cover of this he effected at least ten different assurances for £2,000 each in London and elsewhere. Again he had the game in his own hands—again the lady fell suddenly ill, and died of convulsions.—There was no hast in forwarding the funeral—the body lay almost in state, and was visited by numerous friends who called to see the last of her. The physician certified that she had died of a complaint he could scarcely name, and the grave received a coffin. The merchant retained his position in Liverpool, and bore his sorrows with dignity, scarcely alluding to the assurance that were due, and affecting indifference when they were named. But he had selected his victims with skill—they were safe men; and he duly received the money. From this period he seemed to decline in health—change of air was prescribed—and thus the desponding father, the gallant captain, and the respectable merchant, got clear off with his enormous booty, chuckling at the success of his infamous scheme.

NOT AFRAID OF HOPS.—A big bellied fellow named Rolff, used to frequent a dram shop, in Philadelphia where a few wits and mutton headed individuals were wont to congregate. Old Rolff was "death on the pale hoss" on beer; he could drink equal to a London tapster or a Dutch Burgomaster, and had often taken down his pint at one gulp, easy as falling off a log. One day, a few jockers being around, one doubted the capacity of the old man to guttle a quart of beer at a draught.

'You choost pay for em,' says Rolff, 'you choost pay for em, an' by tunder den you see if old Jake Rolff can't swallar a quart of peer without winkin.'

'We'll pay for it daddy,' says one, if you'll down with it in one long guzzle.'

'Veri vell, fotch on the peer.'

The beer was brought in a large, deep brown mug. Before pouring in the beer, a defunct mouse had been quietly immured; the old man took the mug, foaming to the brim, raised it to the necessary elevation, and down it went.

'How'd it go daddy?' was the cry, as the old man, with bloated visage and distended eye, sat down the empty mug.

'How'd it go? Bah! Goot! Dar vas van tam pig hop in de bottom, but you thinks I care a tam for dem tings.'

UGLY VS UGLY.—In the eastern part of Delaware county, in that State, there resided a man by the name of ——, now a justice of the peace, and very sensible man, but by common consent the ugliest looking individual in the whole county, being long, gaunt, sallow, and awry, with a gait like a kangaroo. One day he was hunting, and no one of the mountain roads he met a man on foot and alone, who was longer, gaunter, uglier, by all odds, than himself. He could give the "Squire" fifty, and beat him. Without saying a word, B—— raised his gun and deliberately levelled it at the stranger. 'For God's sake, don't shoot,' shouted the man in great alarm. "Stranger," replied B——, "I swore ten years ago that if I ever met a man uglier than I was I'd shoot him, and you are the first one I've ever seen." The stranger, after taking a careful survey of his rival, replied, "Wal, if I look worse than you do shoot; I don't want to live any longer!"

DOWN ON HIM.—A dandy, not very remarkable for the acuteness of his feeling of his wit, wishing to banter a testy old gentleman, who had lately garnished his mouth with a complete set of false teeth, flippantly inquired—

'Well, my good sir, I have often heard you complain of your teeth; pray, when do you expect to be troubled with the toothache again?'

'When you have an affection of the heart, or a brain fever,' was the reply.

☞ An editor somewhere in the west has become so hollow, from depending on the printing business alone for bread, that he proposes to sell himself to some gentlemen, to be used as a stovepipe.