

THE BANANA—A WONDERFUL PRODUCTION.

A correspondent of the St. Louis *Republican*, writing from Brazil, has the following about the banana:

But the most wonderful production of this and all tropical countries, in my estimation, is the banana and its synonym, the plantain. We have half a dozen varieties—each with peculiar flavor and qualities. Some grow 8 or 10 feet high—others 20. The stalks are from 6 to 12 inches thick, but almost as soft and succulent as celery. Each of them bear one bunch of bananas, and one only, when it is cut down with a stroke of the *espa da* to secure the fruit and give place to other stalks. And thus they grow and ripen perpetually all the year round. A great traveler has calculated that the plantain on one acre of ground will produce as much food as 133 acres of wheat, or 44 acres of potatoes. The fruit constitutes the principle reliance of the poor, and is a luxury for all. It is good raw, roasted, baked, and indeed in every form, and equally relished by all domestic fowls and animals, that devour fruit, leaves, stalks and all, with the greatest avidity.

The banana requires but a single planting for a lifetime—putting in the ground a single sprout or shoot from the banana patches, at a distance of 20 or 30 feet from each other, and on ground that you always calculate to spare for that purpose, because it is impossible to extirpate the root. The one stalk soon gives more—springing out from the sides in the ground perpetually—and in a few years covering the intervening spaces until the whole surface becomes a forest of fruit and foliage, with scarcely room to pass through the cool, overhanging arches. A banana, or a banana-patch, is a beautiful sight—with their stalks and their produce in all stages of perfection, the broad leaves waving in the breeze and fanning in lazy repose, while the bodies of the trees bend under their luscious burdens, and would often break down with the weight, except from neighboring support. There are 100 to 200 bananas on a bunch like the grapes, and the bunches are generally as much as a stout man can carry. They should always be cut as soon as the fruit is matured—but while the skin is yet green—and hang up in the shade to turn yellow, which improves the flavor. It takes about a year for stalk and fruit to mature from the first planting, and then there is never any more trouble with the crop, scarcely any hoeing or weeding, no culture, only "slay and eat." Certainly it is the greatest boon ever bestowed on the indolent tropics. A native, swinging in his hammock, with a bunch of ripe bananas hanging in reach on the one side, and a smouldering fire on the other by which he might light his little cigar without getting up, is a most perfect picture of contentment.

LOST ARTS.—In regard to colors we are far behind the ancients. None of the colors in the Egyptian paintings of thousands of years ago are in the least faded, except the green. The Tyrian purple of the entombed city of Pompeii is as fresh to-day as it was those thousands of years ago. Some of the stucco, painted ages before the Christian era, broken up and mixed, reverted to its original lustre. And yet we pity the ignorance of the dark-skinned children of the ancient Egypt. The colors upon the walls of Nero's festal vault are as fresh as if painted yesterday. So is the cheek of the Egyptian prince who was contemporaneous with Solomon, and Cleopatra, at whose feet Caesar laid the riches of his empire.

And in regard to metals. The edges of the statues of the obelisks of Egypt, and of the ancient walls of Rome, are as sharp as if but hewn yesterday. And the stones still remain so closely fitted that their seams, laid with mortar, cannot be penetrated with the edge of a pen-knife. And their surface is exceedingly hard, so hard that when the French artists engraved two lines upon the obelisk brought from Egypt, they destroyed in the tedious task, many of the best tools which can be manufactured. And yet these ancient monuments are traced all over with inscriptions placed upon them in olden time. This, with other facts of a striking character, prove that they were far more skilled in metals than we are. Quite recently it is recorded that when an American vessel was on the shores of Africa a son of that belighted region made from an iron hoop knife superior to any on board of the vessel, and another made a sword of unmasculine excellence from a piece of tin.

THANKSGIVING.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF NOVEMBER
NEXT APPOINTED.

The following proclamation has just been issued:

By the President of the United States:
A PROCLAMATION.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, has been pleased to vouchsafe to us as a people another year of that national life which is an indispensable condition of peace, security and progress. That year, moreover, has been crowned with many peculiar blessings. The civil war which was so recently among us, has not been anywhere re-opened. Foreign intervention has ceased to excite alarm or apprehension. Intrusive pestilence has been benignly mitigated. Domestic tranquillity has improved, sentiments of conciliation have largely prevailed, and affections of loyalty and patriotism have been widely renewed. Our fields have yielded quite abundantly; our mining industry has been richly rewarded; and we have been allowed to extend our railroad system far into the interior recesses of the country; while our commerce has resumed its customary activity in foreign seas. These great national blessings demand a national acknowledgement. Now, therefore, I, ANDREW JOHNSON, President of the United States, do hereby recommend that Thursday, the twenty-ninth day of November next, be set apart and be observed everywhere in the several States and Territories of the United States by the people thereof, as a day of thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, with due remembrance that in His temple doth every man speak of His honor. I recommend also that on the same solemn occasion, we do humbly and devoutly implore him to grant to our national councils and to our whole people that divine wisdom which alone can lead any nation into the ways of all good. In offering these national thanksgiving praises and supplications, we have the divine assurance that the Lord remaineth a king forever; those that are meek shall He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle shall He learn His way. The Lord shall give strength to His people, and the Lord shall give to His people the blessing of peace.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed. Done at the city of Washington this eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six, and of the independence of the United States the ninety-first.

ANDREW JOHNSON.

By the President, William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

AN AEROLITE.—A few evenings since Mrs. George H. Cutter, of this city, while sitting at the window of her summer residence, Ocean street, Lynn, discovered a very brilliant meteoric display. Following the course of the erratic messenger she witnessed its descent directly beneath her window upon the grass. A servant also witnessed the phenomenon, and both rushed out to ascertain the nature of the object, which they were satisfied was material. On approaching the spot they discovered a white substance, and upon touching it found it to be hot, and smelling strongly of sulphur. It was brought to this city, and submitted to Dr. Jackson, who pronounced it a very fine specimen of an aerolite.—*Boston Journal*.

CURE FOR NEURALGIA.—Some time since we published, at the request of a friend, a receipt to cure neuralgia. Half a drachm of sal ammonia, in an ounce of camphor water, to be taken a teaspoonful at a dose, and the dose repeated several times, at intervals of five minutes, if the pain be not relieved at once. Half a dozen different persons have since tried the receipt, and in every case an immediate cure has been effected. In one, the sufferer, a lady, had been affected for more than a week, and her physician was unable to alleviate her sufferings, when a solution of sal ammonia in camphor water relieved her in a few minutes.—[*Alta Californian*].

A QUESTION OF ORDERS.—A correspondent of the *London Church Review* proposes the reception of dissenters into the church in whole denomination, allowing them to retain their peculiarities. He sees no reason why there may not be Methodist or Baptist orders in the Church of England, just as there are orders of Dominicans, Passionists, &c., in the Church of Rome.

DURING the late storm Vermonters did not see the sun for seven days.

THE MEXICAN CAPITAL.

Mexico, unlike many Spanish American places that I have seen, is a live city. There is much within its limits to interest the stranger. Its strange customs, faces, brilliant equipages, varieties of uniform, and the moving scenes of daily life, to say nothing of the thrilling historical associations connected with the place, all present new and pleasing phases of life. The city has increased since the French occupation, and will probably proportionally fall back next year after their departure. At present it has about 250,000 inhabitants, and is the largest city in Spanish America. A great many families have removed here from Queretere, Guanajuato, Puebla, and other distant places, for the increased security offered by the capital to life and property. Many houses are being built, especially in the western districts towards Chapultepec, and the value of land has been largely enhanced within the last few years. Most of the conveniences of life known to other cities are found in Mexico.

The streets are all lighted with benzine, manufactured from pines growing in the dense forests along the slopes of the Mexican cordillera. An English company (connected with the Vera Cruz and Mexican Railroad) have the contract to light the city with gas, and a portion of the pipes for that purpose are already laid. The great cost of coal, however, must always prove a serious draw back to the profits of such an enterprise, and has, until now, prevented its active prosecution. Probably little will be done until the railroad to Vera Cruz is completed, when coal or some other gaseous material, can be more cheaply obtained. Steam and horse railroads are in operation between the city and Tacubaya, five miles out, and also to Guadeloupe, about the same distance. That portion of the great Vera Cruz railroad extending to Puebla, (about one-third of the whole road) will be completed and in running order this fall. The streets of Mexico, unlike those of Havana and other Spanish cities, are generally wide, level, and kept in excellent condition. They are paved with small, round cobble stones brought from the neighboring volcanoes, and are bordered with convenient flag-stone sidewalks with curb-stones. This, and indeed the entire material of which the city is built, is of volcanic rock. The streets are laid out regularly, running with the cardinal points and crossing each other at right angles, like those of Philadelphia. The calles (streets), Plateros, San Augustine, Doneces, Francisco, Espiritu Santo and Santo Domingo, are among the principle thoroughfares where life in Mexico may be seen to the best advantage, although the Pasco de Bucareli the Alameda and the Plaza, upon which the palace and cathedral front, are famous gathering places.

For sight-seeing, the visitor will find enough to occupy him a few weeks, after which he will have done Mexico pretty thoroughly and may leave with the certainty of having seen all that is worth visiting. A city so isolated, amid the mountains of the far interior, and so difficult of access from the sea, is thrown upon its own resources for amusement; but the Mexicans are fond of pleasure and are as gay a people as could be expected from the generally sombre character of the Spanish-American.

CHEAP FOOD.—Dr. Patton, in a letter to the *Independent*, says:

A man of benevolence and wealth in Glasgow has opened a large number of establishments where meals, simple but sufficient, are provided at a very small cost—breakfast for seven cents, and dinner for—well, wait till I tell you. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," which I found to be literally true in the sequel; for I entered, determined to make actual trial of the ordinary bill of fare prepared for the workman, paid my money for the usual plain dinner, and sat down to a little table where a coarse looking boy, just from some factory or shop, was finishing his meal. The dinner instantly laid before me consisted of three courses. Course first—a bowl of pea soup, well made and hot, which I ate with good relish, being fortunately fond of the dish. Course second—corned beef and three mealy potatoes. The beef was tender and not too salt, and the potatoes just as they should be. Course third—plum pudding; savory and toothsome, plentiful in rations, without being heavy. There was a dinner not to be despised by any hungry man, and it cost just five cents. So much for purchasing and cooking food in large quantities. The proprietor manages to make his outlay return him the ordinary interest on his money

ARTILLERY EXPERIMENTS IN ENGLAND.

About the middle of last month some experiments were made at Shoeburyness, in England, for the purpose of testing both targets and projectiles, which have some interest in connection with the recent trial of the Rodman guns at Fortress Monroe. The *London Times* of the 13th Sept., contains the following account:

In the first instance, one part of the target was made with no less than eight-inch iron, with the warrior backing of 18 inches of teak, with an inner skin of wrought iron three-quarters of an inch thick, the whole being strengthened with girder ribs of wrought iron of most powerful description. To this target were two wings, each of which, though nearly vertical in position, sloped off sideways at an angle of about 60 degrees. All the plates were of the best quality of rolled iron, and were fastened with double the usual number of the Palliser bolts. A stronger target, with the exception of that of Mr. Chalmers, has probably never been tried at Shoebury. There is, in fact, no vessel in the British service now carrying eight-inch armor-plates, and the built-up 12-inch plates of the American Monitors are weaker beyond all comparison than the resistance which a single solid 8-inch plate will offer. The experiments were made to ascertain the best form of shell for penetrating and destructive effect, and also the relative value for such results of steel as compared with the Palliser chilled metal. All were fired from the 9-inch muzzle-loading wrought iron Woolwich rifle gun. The first fired were Mr. Firth's steel shot, but the damage by these was not of any great effect, the shots barely burying themselves, or indenting it slightly. With the Palliser model shell, constructed of chilled metal, the most surprising results were obtained. One of these, the last of the kind fired, went clean through everything—plate, backing and inner skin, and lodged itself, after exploding in some timber, about 20 feet behind the target. Anything more crushing than the shock of this projectile it would be difficult to conceive, for it struck full upon one of the strongest vertical parts of the target, and tore its way through as if only opposed by a timber screen. Another penetrated no less than 19 inches and a half, bulging and injuring the backing most seriously, while a third fired at the inclined wing of the target penetrated nearly 7 inches and a half, making a hole in the iron 13 inches long by 10 wide. A fourth went nearly through, and remained imbedded to a depth of 12 inches and a half, and some time was consumed before this last could be worked out with a crow-bar. The chilled shot was equally successful with the shell. The first aimed at the incline of the target struck upon its vertical part and penetrated completely through the eight-inch plate, smashing one of the powerful ribs behind it. A second on the incline, and just near the comparatively slight mark made by Mr. Firth, tore through the plate to the depth of 7 inches and a half. Some shot designed by the Ordnance Select Committee, having a screwed-on base, and made of Mr. Firth's steel, were next tried, but their results, though good, were comparatively insignificant to those achieved by the Palliser shot and shell. No one succeeded in getting in as deeply as the chilled metal, and not one of any kind whatever even went half way through the target. In fact, the importance of Major Palliser's invention can scarcely be over-rated. The target tried yesterday was, as we have said, stronger than the broadside of any ship afloat, yet it was pierced and broken up by these projectiles when all others failed. The strongest built armor-ship in the British navy is the *Bellerophon*, yet a month ago Major Palliser sent his shot and shell through the section representing her broadside at Shoebury with as much ease as it broke through the ponderous defences yesterday.

SUBMARINE TORPEDOES.—A letter from Toulon gives an account of some experiments made with the submarine torpedoes invented by Admiral de Chabannes, in presence of several superior officers of the navy and engineering department. The writer describes these torpedoes as simply a number of glass bottles, each containing two kiloes of the *poudre Fontaine*, and fastened together with a string. The apparatus having been disposed under water, a large fishing boat was drawn over the spot, when it was blown nearly a foot out of the water, stove in, and sunk by the explosion of two of the bottles.