

Chancery, and its records show that in Queen Elizabeth's time the roll of its law students amounted to 112. It was appurtenant to Gray's Inn, as also was Staple Inn, which was of older date and of more importance, having in Queen Elizabeth's time 145 students on its books in term time. Recent interests, however, make it more memorable than the earlier ones. In the middle of the last century Dr. Johnson wrote his "Rasselas" while a resident there, that with the profits he might defray the expense of his mother's funeral and pay some little debts which she had left behind. At the beginning of the present century here lived and worked Isaac Reed, a well-known Shakspearian scholar, and it was in his chambers that Steevens received and corrected the proof sheets of the most popular of all the editions of the dramatist. It seems the singular irony of fate that these little quiet, forgotten haunts of law students and men of letters should be turned into the headquarters of such a bustling and transitory business as a railway carrier's. Yet even in this the *genius loci* is curiously propitiated. Since the first edition of Smith's "Leading Cases" was published, nearly fifty years ago, no name has been so familiar as a household word in the mouths of judges, counsel, and law students as that of Baxendale, whose successor is the reputed purchaser of the Inns.

The Swiss Presidential Election.

The Swiss Confederation, like the United States, has just been electing its President. The President of the Swiss Confederation is more strictly called the President of the Federal Council, which body of seven members is elected by the Federal Assembly of two Houses. The Assembly has just re-elected the Council of 1881 entire, and the presidency has fallen in accordance with custom to the Vice-president of last year, M. Schenck, Radical deputy from Berne. The Radicals, as we have remarked before, are still in a decisive majority in the National Council, although in the State Council (the second Chamber) they are only in a majority of two, and were returned (proportional representationists will be shocked to hear) by a minority of votes (5,500 against 6,000). One of the first measures which the Federal Council will submit to Parliament is one for raising the duty on alcohol, by way of checking the alarming growth of intemperance. It is hoped on this occasion to avert the else inevitable veto of "Monseigneur Referendum," as the Radicals call the appeal to the people, by paying over the proceeds of the duty to the relief of local—that is, cantonal—taxation.

Utilising the Open Spaces of London.

Lord Brabazon's annual report of the Metropolitan Public Garden and Playground Association is doubly interesting. It shows what ought to be done for the people as well as what has been done. It seems extraordinary that over seventy-eight open spaces in the very heart of London should until two years ago have remained useless for purposes of health and recreation. Lord Brabazon's association has taken thirty of these in hand, laid them out in gardens and playgrounds, fitted them with gymnasia and seats, and given them over to the local or metropolitan authorities to keep up and take care of. The association is still struggling with forty-eight more open spaces, and with every prospect of success, provided the needful funds be forthcoming, for which his lordship makes a well-timed appeal. The cause is a thoroughly sound and healthy one. All classes are benefited—the poor, who want room, the rich, who want the air of London kept pure, and so are directly interested in keeping open the lungs of London, which are its disused burial-grounds, its waste places, and its obscure squares, as well as the parks. The money must come from the people who have got it for the people who want it, and the first expense over the district which reaps the benefit pays for its permanence.

"The Law of Burdinsack."

Scotch jurists, it is interesting to note, held in early times that circumstances of extreme want excluded the idea of, as they quaintly expressed it, *dole* (malicious or criminal intention) from an act otherwise criminal. This opinion was founded on an old statute, "of the Law of Burdinsack," which enacted that a man was not to be punished as a thief for stealing a calf or a sheep, or as much meat as one man could carry on his back. The exact words of the statute are as follows:—

Forybur-pananseea, that is, for the theft of ane calfe, or of ane scheip, or for sa meikill meate as ane man may beare upon his back: na court sould be halden (to punish the doer heirof as ane thief). 2. But he in quha's land the thief is taken: shale have of him ane scheip, or ane cow; and mair over the thief sall be scourged. 3. Because it is statute that na man sall be hangd for ane less fault than for twa schieip; quhereof ilke ane is worth saxtene pennies.

The later authorities say: the judge shall apply the ordinary pains of the law, leaving the necessitous to supplicate his relief from her Majesty.

An Amusing Story.

The following story reaches us from Paris:—On Friday last a lady, having paid her hotel bill, sent away her boxes on a cab and sallied forth on foot. No sooner had she departed than the landlord discovered that the clock had disappeared from the mantelpiece of the room which his late lodger had been occupying, though he remembered to have seen it there subsequent to her trunks being despatched. Convinced that she must be the thief, he rushed out in hot pursuit, and

overtaking her, he charged her with the robbery and gave her into custody, the lady meanwhile protesting loudly against the indignity offered her, and vowing vengeance against the traducer. She was, however, taken before the *juge d'instruction*, to whom she resumed her torrent of indignant denial with the extraordinary volubility peculiar to the daughters of Gaul. Her indignation was at its height when, lo! twelve o'clock rang forth in clear tones from the region of madame's dress improver. The expression of consternation depicted upon the fair pilferer's countenance, together with the appositeness of the quaint phenomenon, were too much for the gravity of the officials, who burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. Five minutes later a female warder returned the telltale timepiece to its owner. Will Mr. Oscar Wilde still insist upon "the utter uselessness of that hideous monstrosity—the bustle"?

The Origin of Thimbles.

A bi-centenary of a curious kind has recently been celebrated at Amsterdam, being no less than the celebration of the invention of the thimble. It is just two centuries since last October that the first European thimble was made by Nicolas van Benschoten, a young goldsmith, who devised the article for the protection of the finger of his lady love, M^{me}. van Reusselaer, for thimbles, like many greater things, owe their origin to Dan Cupid. The English were the first to make thimbles on a large scale; but long before either Dutch or English thought of thimbles Chinese ladies were thimbled when they worked at their grand embroidery. The Chinese thimbles bore—and bear to this day—the form of a lovely lotos flower. There is no such poetry of shape in the Western finger-hat.

Mr. Fowler's Appointment.

We heartily congratulate Mr. H. H. Fowler on his appointment. It was, perhaps, too sudden a leap upwards to think of offering an outsider such a post as that vacated by Mr. Courtney, but Mr. Fowler will find in the office vacated by the elevation of Mr. Hibbert a useful apprenticeship to official life, and a capital field for the development of his energy. Few men below the gangway have given the Government more valuable support than Mr. Fowler and Mr. Caine, and the Government gained a distinct accession of strength when it enrolled these gentlemen in the ministerial hierarchy.

The Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes.

Public opinion will be at once satisfied and disappointed with the important official communiqué published on Wednesday on behalf of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes. It will be something of a disappointment to hear that there is no chance of any part of the Report seeing the light before Easter; but this delay is a necessary result of the mass of evidence which has been already and yet remains to be taken. The Commission is being made a very big thing, and enormous pains have been taken by every one connected with it. We do not anticipate that the actual recommendations will be very striking, and they will probably enough be antiquated before they appear; but the collection of facts and opinions which is being accumulated will be of the highest possible value.

"A Story of Monte Carlo."

A correspondent, writing from the Junior United Service Club, says:—

The "Story of Monte Carlo," which recently appeared in your columns, vividly recalls to me the story in question, as I was the "English officer" mentioned by your correspondent. There is only one inaccuracy in his account, which I may be allowed to correct. The unfortunate man died at the hospital at Monaco, although it was, of course, given out that he recovered. The English visitors at the Hôtel de Paris, where the poor fellow was carried, subscribed £30 to procure him good medical aid and comforts. To show how callous the employés are at the Casino, I may mention that one of the croupiers gravely remarked to me soon after the event that "the gentleman should have gone into the garden if he wished to shoot himself," and that it was "très mauvais goût" on his part to alarm so many ladies. Since the winter of 1873-4 I have passed several seasons in the Riviera, and have witnessed many similar scenes. From my experience of the Casino of Monte Carlo I should say that at least fifty suicides are caused every winter by losses at the tables.

The Memorial to Mr. Fawcett.

The notable gathering in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge on Saturday and the obvious genuineness of the speeches were in themselves a noble memorial to Professor Fawcett, and the committee will have some difficulty in making the material memorial equally worthy of him. Posthumous portraits, by however eminent an artist, are seldom satisfactory, but the proposal of a portrait was, we suppose, inevitable. With regard to the use of the surplus, if any, we are glad to see that the suggestion to found a Fawcett prize was not specifically embodied in the resolution, but that the committee are left a wide discretion as to the means for "encouraging economic science or some study connected with India." We doubt, however, whether any better means will be suggested than that of the publication of economic papers. The Pitt Press and the Clarendon Press are managed in these days on commercial principles; and there could be no more appropriate addition to the University resources than a fund such as we have suggested.