

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JULY 15, 1887.

THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS which occurred on the 4th of July of the present year was very great. In Boston, twenty-seven individuals applied for surgical aid at the City Hospital, and nine beds are occupied by injured persons. At the Massachusetts General Hospital the number is nearly as great. In New York and in Brooklyn there were also very many casualties more. If a description could be given of all these injuries, the picture would be an appalling one. One of the saddest sights we have ever seen was that of a deaf-mute girl whose clothing took fire from a burning pack of fire-crackers which she carried in her pocket. Her back was so severely burned that she was compelled to lie upon her face in bed, and take her nourishment from a vessel while lying in this position. Three days after the receipt of the injury, she developed lockjaw, and died in twelve hours. It is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when the present barbarous method of celebrating Independence Day will be prohibited by law, and the prohibition enforced.

DR. SAMUEL SEXTON has contributed an article to the *Medical Record* on the subject of boxing the ears. He has upon his records fifty-one cases in which the ear has been injured by blows of the open hand or fist. Of these, thirty-one were males, and twenty females. Of the males, thirteen had been boxed upon the right ear, thirteen upon the left, and three upon both ears. One was kicked by a companion upon the left ear while bathing, and the right ear of another was injured by having the head violently squeezed between the hands of another person. Of the females, fourteen were struck upon the left ear, and six upon the right. Five of the women were assaulted by their husbands. Of the entire number, eight were boxed in play, four by school-teachers, two by parents, and one, a fervent lover, by his sweetheart. Several cases occurred among pugilists, and others were due to assaults and brawls. The nature of the injuries varied to a considerable degree. One had inflammation of the ear, with suspicion of intracranial trouble. He had had a running of the ear for twelve years, following a blow upon that organ. This patient subsequently died of brain disease. In another case the ear became inflamed, and the hearing was very much impaired. In still another, the patient was slapped by his father upon the left ear. Immediate pain and deafness followed, with a bloody discharge from the ear. It was three months before this case recovered. The dangers to which Dr. Sexton calls attention are so grave, that parents, teachers, and others should never punish those committed to their charge by boxing the ear.

DO WE WANT AN INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT WITH ENGLAND?

THE agitation for an international copyright with England was at its topmost vigor just fifty years ago. It is going on to-day with precisely the same vigor, promoted by the same interest, buttressed by the same arguments, as at its beginning. But meantime the situation has changed. In 1837, when Henry Clay championed a bill for an Anglo-American international copyright in the Senate, all our publishing-houses printed English books without going through the form of asking anybody's permission. All of our magazines were 'cruisers,' using the matter they found in the English monthlies and quarterlies with despotic freedom; and the question, 'Who reads an American book?' was answered with practical unanimity by our own countrymen, 'Nobody.'

To-day we are on the eve of another congressional effort for a bill providing for an Anglo-American international copyright. But what is now the situation? Our publishing-houses publish English books as fast as (and often earlier than) they appear in Great Britain, either by purchasing advance sheets of the British publisher, or reprinting by license. And our magazines find plenty of suitable material offered them at home not only, but quite too much, and so rather discourage voluntary contributions at all, preferring to invite contributions from parties chosen by their editors. The exceptions to these propositions are insignificant; and, even were they larger, they would still be exceptions, from which nothing but the rule can be argued. The only difference between the agitation of to-day and the agitation of 1837 is, that to-day we are told that the reform is desired because American authors are suffering for it, and because the absence of an Anglo-American copyright cheapens and discourages their work; and that it is therefore unpatriotic to further deny it.

Do we want any more books than we have already? What branch of science, or literature, or art, is suffering? From what quarter comes complaint of a dearth of books? Courts are established for the trial of controversies between man and man. Were there no litigation, there would be no courts. And yet one of the horn-book and capital maxims of court is, that 'it is to the interest of the public that there should be an end of litigation,'—a maxim which is interpreted to mean that compromises and quietings of actions between parties (statutes of limitation, or any discretion of a court tending to discontinuances of lawsuits) will always be encouraged. Are we not coming to the time when there will be some such a paraphrase of this maxim as that 'it is to the interest of literature that there shall be an end to books'? Certainly the groaning columns of our book-stores begin to bewilder us with their profusion of literary wares, and suggest a question as to how much of all this mass is, after all, literature. How much of it will be on these shelves a year, or even a month, from now, or will have been packed down in the cellars below, or turned over to the paper-stock men in the Ann Streets of our great centres?

If it should prove, for example, to be the fact that a couple of dozen men in the United States do all the writing for our American magazines, whose business would it be, except that of the public,—who buy those magazines or not, entirely as they please? Magazines are not edited, have not for the last ten years been edited, as of old, by voluntary contributions. The editor knows what his readers want, and writes to employ just what writers they want. He saves his reading of manuscripts, thus conserving his eyesight as well as his judgment. If some of our magazine-editors would just once print some of the manuscript they do receive from voluntary correspondents,—just as they receive them, with the orthography, etymology, syntax and prosody, punctuation, and so forth, precisely as their authors send them,—I think our public would be convinced that the editors are right in the policy they pursue. And I do not suppose the magazine-purchasing public would very largely clamor for a second effort, on the editors' part, to 'recognize voluntary contributors.' Add to this the fact that a large percentage of the voluntary contributors to our magazines,—convinced that a conspiracy exists among all magazine-editors to reject their manuscript,—'get their blood up,' so to speak, and print at their own expense in pamphlet or book form, and we derive some idea of the causes which are at work to load down our booksellers' counters. It seems to me that the world of readers will be more apt to ask for a law which will restrict, rather than for one which will increase, the publishing of books; and that they would look less askance at the proposal for an Anglo-American copyright law if assured that it would curtail, rather than exaggerate, the present deluge of printed and published matter.

Another change in the situation since the early agitation for English