

## THE GATHERER.

## Guide-Posts for Great Cities.

Many have had painful experience of the difficulty of finding their way in a great city after darkness has set in. The names of streets are too often dimly painted or hidden away in obscure corners, and one may sometimes walk half a mile without being able to ascertain the locality. Common sense suggests that it would be a good plan to have the name of the street written on one face of every lamp, whilst at each turning the name of the side street might be added on another face. The street lamps would thus at night be most efficient illuminated guide-posts. In a few favoured localities in the metropolis this method is already adopted, but we would have it in use everywhere. Would it not also be a good plan to mark the points of the compass on the tops of pillar letter-boxes? This, if we remember rightly, is done in some provincial towns. Thus—possessed of a good map—we could steer our way from one district to another without trouble, and without appealing to the friendly aid of policemen and passers-by.

## Our Sweet Tooth.

Science goes beyond its province when it takes to dealing with confectionery, and flavouring sweets with chemicals in imitation of the flavours of real fruit. Pear, pine-apple, and various other flavours are now produced from butyric acid, instead of from pears and pine-apples themselves. Such methods of manufacture should be forbidden, and those who eat sweets should set their faces against any but real fruit flavours, which for the most part are perfectly safe. For the most part, we say, for some samples of vanilla, now so often used for flavouring, have recently been productive of very unpleasant effects. These have arisen, it is said, from the fact that the beans brought from Columbia are covered, as Professor Shroff has shown, with the acrid oil of the *anacardium*. So, then, we have danger in the confectioner's shop, as well as death in the teapot, unknown terrors in drinking-water, sickness in the butter-tub, and perils in the streets, as we have just shown. But as soldiers in a battle get indifferent to danger, even though bullets rain thick as hailstones, so in the midst of the perils of modern civilisation we keep cool and collected, eat, drink, and move to and fro, with scarcely a thought of these matters.

## Handy New Pins.

Since pins came into use—and they were employed in this country for toilet purposes as early as the latter part of the fifteenth century—they have undergone several changes, both in material and in form. Not the least noticeable of these is one which has lately been introduced by an American inventor. He has recognised the fact that the ordinary pin has a trick of working itself out of the fabric in which it is placed. By his method this is rendered impossible. His pin is made of a piece of ordinary wire sharpened

at both ends. One extremity is then turned down and wound spirally for a couple of turns about the shank. When the pin is inserted a slight twist is given to the bent end, causing the sharp point on the spiral to catch and enter the cloth. The inventor has not only contrived the pin, but some very ingenious machinery for its manufacture. One apparatus cuts off the wire, sharpens the ends, and throws the piece into a hopper, whence it passes into another machine which produces the spiral. The pins can be produced at the rate of about 200 per minute.

## Hidden Lines.

Two lines from "Love's Labour's Lost" are buried in the following verse:—

Let me for a moment ask,  
Where has Linda gone to-day?  
If there is a pleasant task,  
Any joyous word to say,  
She, the author of it all,  
Comes in laughing mood to me,  
Opens the door, and from the hall  
Comes a world of light to me.  
Then she speaks and preaches, teaches  
Such a sermon ne'er I heard,  
That in tones of beauty reaches,  
Sweet as note of singing bird,  
And I grudge to lose a word.  
Then, with woman's grace, she smiling  
Meets my eye, my heart beguiling.

J. G.

## Kangaroos on English Ground.

The kangaroo has been introduced on several large estates in France, and is now hunted in that country as game. It readily adapts itself to the climate. What has been done in France may also be done in England. There is one species at least of kangaroo, abundant in Tasmania, which is said to be well suited for acclimatisation in this country. It is hardy, and in favourable situations breeds with great regularity and requires little attention. It would be quite at home in many of our counties where the soil is dry, and the character of the ground affords shelter from the north and east.

Instead of chasing the deer, a kangaroo hunt might enliven the existence of our country gentry. In motion the animal is decidedly peculiar. It makes its escape from its pursuers by a series of extraordinary leaps, and sometimes outstrips the fleetest greyhounds. Even when at rest and peacefully inhabiting an English park, kangaroos would be interesting; they have a quaint air of timid eccentricity.

Kangaroo venison is an excellent meat for the table. It is so highly esteemed by Australian colonists, that in regions where the animal was once plentiful it is now scarce.



### A Rare Bird of Stormy Seas.

The singular bird shown in our engraving is the Surf Scoter, a species of duck found in considerable numbers on the shores of high latitudes in North America. It is seldom seen in Great Britain, indeed not more than a dozen instances are recorded of its being found in the British Isles. The last to visit us met with an unfriendly reception: it was shot, in the beginning of this year, in the estuary at Christchurch, Hants.



Wilson, the celebrated ornithologist, tells us that the Surf Scoter frequents the shores and bays of the sea where the waves roll over the sandy beach. It lives chiefly on small bivalve shell-fish that lie in the sand near the surface.

The skin of the Surf Scoter is remarkably strong; the flesh is coarse, and has a decided flavour of fish.

The nest is a careful piece of architecture. Audubon describes one which he discovered. It was planted in a salt-water marsh, and lay very snug amid the tall leaves of a bunch of grass. The material consisted of withered and rotten weeds, the former being circularly arranged over the latter, and producing a cavity, six inches in diameter by two and a half in depth. The border of the inner cup was lined with the down of the bird, just like an Eider duck's nest. Five eggs lay in the nest: they had smooth shells, and were of a pale yellowish or cream colour.

### A Word for Washing-Day.

How to deal with flannels and linens, forms an important chapter in the operations of the washing-tub. When flannel has become yellow through age, in order to whiten it dissolve a pound and a half of soap in fifty pounds of water, and add two-thirds of an ounce of spirits of ammonia. Place the flannel in the water, stir it vigorously round for a short time, then take it out and wash it in pure water. When black or navy-blue linens are washed, do not use soap. Take instead two potatoes, wash and peel them, and then grate them into tepid soft water in which a tea-spoonful of ammonia has been put. Wash the linens with this, and rinse them in cold blue-water. They will need no starch, and should be dried and ironed on the wrong side. To preserve the natural colour in buff linens, use an infusion of hay; an infusion of bran is equally serviceable for brown linens and prints.

### Borrowed Strength.

Nature has hidden many strange virtues in plants. In that of which a sprig is shown in our engraving she has placed extraordinary sustaining power, for which weak and weary humanity may be grateful. The coca plant—*Erythroxylon coca*—is a shrub which in habit resembles our familiar blackthorn bush. It is extensively cultivated and traded in by the Peruvian Indians. The leaves are thin, but opaque, and of a dark green colour. It is in these that the virtue lies. Those who chew them experience a strong nervous excitement, and in this way are enabled to perform feats of endurance which would otherwise be beyond their power: they can travel long distances, bear heavy



burdens, and work at a stretch for twenty or thirty hours. Prescott, speaking of this invigorating quality, says that "with a small supply of coca in his pouch, and a handful of roasted maize, the Peruvian Indian of our time performs his wearisome journeys, day after day, without fatigue, or at least without complaint." Only last year Sir Robert Christison, addressing the Botanical Society of Edinburgh, gave his personal experience of the influence of the plant. He had ascended Ben Voirlich, and was much wearied when he reached the summit, but after chewing a portion of the leaf he found himself able to make the descent with juvenile elasticity and vigour, in spite of his seventy years. Besides fitting for exertion, it is said that the leaves, when masticated in moderation, possess a soothing charm, and induce a pleasant forgetfulness of all care. The active principle contained in them is the same as that of tea, coffee, and cocoa.

Like many another drug, coca produces some effects which are far from beneficial. When used to excess, it is attended with all the mischievous consequences of habitual intoxication. Coca intoxication resembles that of opium, and as the indulgence is repeated, the appetite increases and the power of resistance diminishes, until at last death relieves the miserable victim. Once the habit of chewing coca is acquired, it is broken off with great difficulty, and few who practise it live to old age.