

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

**THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES.** The Salem original of "The House of the Seven Gables" is again occupying the attention of the English papers. "The house actually had seven gables when built in 1662," say they, "and the places where the seven gable windows were are still easily discernible from the inside, although the gables were removed forty years ago." Thus the British desire for plain matter of fact comes to the aid of the Hawthorne imagination.

**AN INTERESTING REPRODUCTION.** An exact reproduction of the edition of Burns published July 31, 1786, by John Wilson at the Cross of Kilmarnock has been issued by Messrs. D. Brown & Co., Wilson's business successors. The text is from photogravure blocks; the blue covers are of the same tint and texture as those used by Wilson, and D. McNaught of Kilmaurs has supervised the preparation of the edition. The oldest of Burns's direct descendants, Mrs. Sarah Eliza Maitland Tombs Burns Hutchinson, died the other day at the age of 87. She was the original of the little girl in the well-known picture of "Bonnie Jean and Her Granddaughter." She married an Irishman and lived in Australia for many years, and her descendants are in England, British Columbia, and Adelaide.

**BIRTHPLACE OF TENNYSON.** One hundred years ago tomorrow the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, rector of Somersby, Lincolnshire, baptized his fourth son in his own church of St. Margaret. It is a small building, but near it is a stone cross reputed to be unique in England, and having a crucifixion carved on one side, and on the other a crowned figure of the Virgin bearing a lily. The wooden stoup for holy water still remains near the church door, and the adjacent sun dial is dated 1756. The Moated Grange is still standing, and also the rectory. Its size has hitherto somewhat protected the tiny village from the bank holiday and other "trippers," but this year it will probably be invaded by flights of motor car and bicycle riders, but their curiosity will make the merest ripple on the tranquillity of the place.

**TENS VERSUS EIGHTS.** Mankind in general may not appreciate the fact, but according to S. S. Buckman, F. G. S., who has written a pamphlet upon the subject, mankind in general suffers greatly because of its lack of an "Octaval System" of notation for money, weights and measures. Mr. Buckman has no use for the decimal or metric system. Of it he says:

The great fault of a decimal system is that division into fourths cannot be accomplished without an odd number, and division into eighths, sixteenths, and so on, is very cumbrous. And yet the eight system is what man requires to use more than any other. It is not only that there is square measure, or that the possession of four sides is common to so many articles of human construction, but man shows a great propensity to halve and halve, or to double and double: often it is a necessity of the case, as in the usual sizes of books—folio, 4to, 8vo, 16mo, and 32mo.

The reason ascribed by the author of the pamphlet

for our failure to adopt an octaval system is highly ingenious. It is, in part, as follows:

If man, in the course of his evolution, had happened to lose that rather primitive character, pentadactylism, and had developed into a four-fingered, four-toed animal, he would have suffered little physical disadvantage, but he would have gained much in saving of mental labor. For, had he been tetradactylous, he would, judging by what he has done in his five-fingered condition, have evolved a system of notation by eights instead of by tens—an octaval instead of a decimal system.

Mr. Buckman, in a prefatory note, gives the history of his pamphlet. It appears that the editor of one of the leading English reviews held his manuscript for twelve months before deciding that he was unable to make use of it. As Mr. Buckman feared other reviews might do the same, he published the pamphlet himself.

It was hailed as an excellent idea when a London publisher some time ago named three ladies, all well-known writers of fiction—Mrs. Steel, Miss Cholmondeley, and Mrs. de la Pasture—to act as judges in a prize competition for a "best novel." But now it appears from a recent London paper that some would-be competitors question the wisdom of a jury composed wholly of women. Of course it is "mere man" who offers the protest, unmindful of the illogical position thus assumed. As for countless centuries, and, in fact, from the beginning of time, it has been man who has constituted himself sole judge and jury of all feminine actions, applying "man-made laws" for the purpose. Be that as it may, however, one writer has declined to submit a manuscript, declaring that as women were to be the judges he would not enter the contest, because, on general principles, he had no confidence in women—in their impartiality and fairness, literary and otherwise. This is a sweeping indictment, and perhaps it is as well that the publisher has concealed the name of the author of the statement. A wiggling and a feminine boycott of his books would assuredly be his fate.

**MIAMI UNIVERSITY CENTENARY.** That a condition of affairs not altogether peaches and cream prevailed in Miami University in the early days of that historic institution is made quite clear by Alfred H. Upham in his recent book, "Old Miami: The Yale of the Early West," (Hamilton, Ohio: The Republican Publishing Company.) Mr. Upham writes entertainingly of the university, which this year celebrates the centenary of its foundation. The following are among the rules and regulations of the college in the pioneer days:

No student shall wear about his person pistol, dirk, stiletto, or other dangerous weapon.

Playing at cards, dice, or any game of chance is strictly prohibited; also the possession of cards, backgammon boards, or any implements used in games of chance.

Any student who shall send or accept a challenge, or be second in a duel, or in any wise aid or abet it, shall be immediately expelled from college.

No student shall, during term time, attend any ball, dancing school, theatrical exhibition, horse race, or any place of similar resort.

It is noted that the regulations against carrying dangerous weapons and dueling, as well as the various "blue laws," were strictly enforced at the college.

**FROM CANOE TO TUNNEL.** The Free Public Library of Jersey City has prepared a highly interesting booklet as a souvenir of the opening of the Hudson tunnels. It is entitled "From Canoe to Tunnel" and is a sketch of the history of transportation between the Cities of New York and Jersey City. It relates the histories of the ferries from the time of the first settlement to the present time, giving quite a detailed account of the first steam ferries. Then follows a brief sketch of the history of tunneling, leading up to the history of the Hudson tunnels, which is given very fully. The data regarding the present Hudson tunnels was supplied by Mr. McAdoo himself, and is, therefore, official; and the more recent facts regarding the ferries was revised by the officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The pamphlet is, therefore, of permanent historic value and not a mere temporary souvenir. The booklet is gotten up in a very attractive style. The seal of the city with the popular motto, "Let Jersey Prosper," appears on the cover. There are two very interesting illustrations depicting the growth of the ferries. One of these is a picture of Fulton's first ferry boat; another a view of the Jersey City water front in 1857, reproduced from a rare old print in the possession of the library.