

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Happenings of the Day—Historical and News Notes.

Every man has his price—but few get it.

And you always get full measure when you acquire a peck of trouble.

It will soon take an expert to distinguish between a Russian crisis and a revolution.

Paradoxically, a shortage in the Kentish hop fields promises a jump in the price.

The people of Helsingfors insist that their town isn't anywhere near as bad as it sounds.

A painter has just died leaving a fortune of \$200,000. Yet some folks insist there's nothing in signs.

The small boy of Russia is not being inspired, these days, with the illusive hope that some day he may be Czar.

It is getting so that when two battleships escape collision the circumstance is worth a paragraph in the news columns.

There are thousands of people in the country who would have been satisfied had Russell Sage been a \$25,000 uncle to them.

James J. Corbett has managed to get into the limelight again by licking a milkman. Treating him to a milk punch, as it were.

The public is beginning to learn some things about his nephews and nieces that Uncle Russell Sage doubtless knew when he made his will.

William Cullen Bryant once wrote an ode to a mosquito, beginning "Fair insect." He must have known that only the lady mosquito lights upon man.

Speaking of universal peace, Russia is preparing to build bigger and heavier battleships, and Japan is experimenting with new and deadlier projectiles.

A sea cow, eighteen feet long, and which cost \$2,000, has been added to the New York aquarium. We suppose it is to furnish milk for the sea urchins there.

A woman is trying to get theatrical managers to refuse to put on pieces which call for the appearance of girls in tight. We have no doubt that the managers will yield to her entreaties the moment such pieces cease to pay.

In Denmark there is a company that insures girls against becoming old maids. A girl who has to pay an unusually high premium over there may be justified in refusing to believe the fellows who tell her she is beautiful.

An Atlanta, Ga., man was arrested a few days ago for kissing his wife in public. This should be a lesson to married men everywhere. Let the married man limit his public demonstrations of affection to calling her "Pet" or "Baby."

An Eastern bard begins a poem thus: An anarchist was working Within a garret mean.

This shows how dangerous it is for bards to sing of things concerning which they are ignorant. Anarchists don't work.

A Chinese viceroy has adopted the plan of keeping a group of Christians in jail to pray for rain. As soon as the climatic conditions are favorable he lets out one lot and takes on another against the next dry spell. A few weeks of wet weather ought to be a great Christianizing influence in that province.

A woman lecturer at the University of Wisconsin the other day said to an audience composed of members of her own sex: "We are never going to be free so long as we wear petticoats. Women must wear a gymnasium-like costume if she wishes to gain her freedom." Is there to be a renaissance of the bloomer.

The spoiling of sons by wealthy fathers is peculiarly a habit of the newly rich. Where money has longer been in the family, the possession of a few millions does not constitute an irresistible temptation to rush out and make a swine of one's self. But the sudden fortunes of the past few years of blessed prosperity have confessedly turned out a crowd of vapid and worthless and helplessly rich young men.

One of the construction firms engaged in rebuilding San Francisco engaged a large quantity of Portland cement, to be delivered this month at the rate of a thousand barrels a day. Delivery at that rate for forty-two days would have exhausted the entire production of cement in the United States in 1880. Last year, however, 34,000,000 barrels were produced, and only the other day a Kansas City company began to build a plant for its manufacture that will turn out half a million barrels a year. When concrete houses become popular the demand for Portland cement will increase to such an extent that every man who has a bed of argillaceous limestone on his farm will have a fortune waiting at his door.

During the fiscal year, ended on June 30, the national government had

a surplus of receipts over expenditures amounting to more than twenty-five million dollars. During the preceding year there was a deficit of nearly the same amount. In 1903-04 there was also a deficit, but it would have been less than two millions if the expenditures had not included a sum of forty million dollars paid for the Panama Canal. The United States, unlike most governments in this respect, does not vary its taxing system from year to year according to the demands that are to be made on the treasury. There has been no change in the tariff on imports since 1897. Only the tariff of 1846, which was in force eleven years, has had a longer life than the Dingley tariff. Nor has any important amendment been made in the internal revenue system since the repeal of the taxes imposed to pay the expenses of the Spanish war. The result of having a fixed system of revenue, the proceeds of which fluctuate as the country is prosperous or otherwise, and of making appropriations without knowing how large the receipts are to be, is that the government has sometimes a large surplus, and again a deficit. Immense receipts for customs in consequence of an unprecedented importation of foreign goods caused the surplus of the past year. Expenditures were large, but the tariff yielded more than three hundred million dollars, and internal revenue receipts also increased, although not so largely as customs. No longer ago than last December a deficit was anticipated, but in the last six months the revenue poured into the treasury in unexpected millions.

Child labor laws seem to fail because legislators do not distinguish carefully between the thing to be accomplished and the means to accomplish it. There is no doubt whatever that legislatures can fix the minimum age at which children may be allowed to work, but in carrying out the purpose of the laws they make, they must be sure that they treat all children alike. The certification of age must be obtainable by all. Child labor laws, so far as their executive provisions go, have been fashioned too much after the laws of European countries. It is very easy in those countries to obtain certificates of age, because they all preserve vital statistics. Every child born into the world is properly recorded, and at any time the date of his birth can be obtained. In this country vital statistics have not been kept until very recent years. Here the States manage these matters to suit themselves. The births of some children are recorded and of others not. Any law that requires a certificate based upon record must necessarily discriminate against those whose births are not a matter of record. The Pennsylvania law has been declared unconstitutional because it so discriminated. Other laws have met similar fate for the same reason. What are needed are provisions that will conform to the conditions obtaining in this country. There is no doubt that a minimum age can be fixed by law. There ought to be some way by which evidence of age can be established that will apply to all alike. This is the problem to be solved, and its solution may lie in the general institution of vital statistics. The courts have not indicated such a solution, they being satisfied simply to declare the defects in laws enacted. The lawmakers must discover how to solve this problem and no doubt they will.

His "Working Clothes."

"I want to get a suit of working clothes," said a man in a clothing store to the salesman who came forward. "Step this way, sir," politely responded the salesman, and the prospective customer went to the rear of the store, where there were huge piles of jeans and blouses and suits varying in price from three to ten dollars. "These won't do," the customer declared. "I want a dress suit." "I thought you said you wanted working clothes," ventured the salesman.

"So I did," the customer calmly responded. "That's the kind of clothes I work in. I'm a musician at the theater."

Embarrassing.

A Philadelphia business man tells this story on himself: "You know in this city there are two telephone companies," he said, "and in my office I have a telephone of each company. Last week I hired a new office boy, and one of his duties was to answer the telephone. The other day, when one of the bells rang, he answered the call, and then came in and told me I was wanted on the phone by my wife."

"Which one?" I inquired, quickly, thinking of the two telephones, of course.

"Please, sir," stammered the boy, "I don't know how many you have."

A Lottery.

Dr. Phaker—Take this prescription; it will either kill or cure you.

Patient—But suppose it kills me?

Dr. Phaker—Nothing ventured, nothing gained. My motto is, 'No cure, no pay.' So I'm taking a chance as well as you."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Overripe.

"The life of an oyster," said the scientific person, "may be fifteen years, but never more than that."

"Indeed?" replied Jigsby. "Then one of the oysters I got in a stew yesterday must have been about 16 years old."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Don't feel complimented when some one tells you that you look comfortable in hot weather: You probably look slouchy.

Mathematicians come under the caption of figureheads.

WAYS ON A GERMAN STEAMER.

Touring Kansas Editor Tells of National Characteristics at Sea.

The German flag flies at the mast-head of this ship. Last year we crossed on an English boat. There is lots of difference between Germans and Englishmen, and it sticks out in boats as well as elsewhere, says the editor of the Hutchinson News in telling of a trip to Europe. Wherever the German goes he has plenty to eat and drink and smoke. The principal occupation of a lot of stewards is wadding food into the passengers at every opportunity. We begin with a hearty breakfast in the morning, then have soup at 11 o'clock, an elaborate lunch at 1 o'clock, tea at 4 o'clock, dinner at 7 o'clock, sandwiches and coffee between times and all kinds of German drinks flowing in floods. On an English boat the women never invaded the sacred smoking room. On the Deutschland they come in for their beer or their coffee and play bridge and penuche. It is the same way as in the different countries.

And then the band plays! A German band never wearies in well doing provided it is supplied with plenty of refreshments. Our band begins with a 10 o'clock in the morning concert, plays at meal times and in the afternoon and evening. Sunday morning it woke us up with the strains of a German hymn. Every time there is the slightest excuse for music the band is there and it does everything from Wagner to cakewalk with equal ability and evident enjoyment.

There are 500 people in the first cabin, including Julia Marlowe. Julia is our star passenger and there is considerable complaint because she does not come out and mix with the best of us. On the last voyage John D. Rockefeller was "it." John made quite a reputation as a "mixer" and once "set up" a small bottle of apollinaris water to a friend. But Julia sticks to her stateroom and is being talked about. She probably doesn't mind it. I really suppose she is lying around in a wrapper or a kimono enjoying the trip better than coming out and being stared at.

The only person on board who is considered properly "stuck up" is the man who wins the "pool." There are two kinds of pools, the hat pool and the auction pool. In the hat pool ten men put in \$4 apiece and they draw for the numbers from 0 to 9. At noon the captain announces the run for the twenty-four hours and if the number is 551 the man who drew the 1 gets the pot of \$50. In auction pool twenty numbers, say from 530 to 549, are put up and auctioned, and then low field, below 530, and high field, above 549. Last night the numbers sold for from \$14 to \$30 and the field for \$85 and \$101.

There was a fog and a head wind, so the run was slow, but the man who paid \$15 for No. 533 got \$681 to spend in Europe. Not many people really put money into the pools, but everybody gets interested and the announcement of the result is like the finish of a horse race and a man or woman who wouldn't bet a cent is "so glad" that somebody won.

TOGO WAS MUCH SHOCKED.

Admiral Horrified to Find that His Photos Were Bought.

Last autumn Admiral Togo's humility led him into what he considered a terrible piece of extravagance, writes Mrs. Hugh Fraser in the World's Work. The court photographer, Maruki, had once taken his portrait, and everybody was buying it—naturally enough. Togo saw himself in all the shop windows, and was very much troubled. He walked into Maruki's one morning and called for the head of the firm, who arrived with smiles and bows to welcome his illustrious client, but the admiral's face was stern. "I am shocked to find," he said, "that the people are buying my photograph. It is very wrong that they should spend money on the portrait of such a stupid person. I wish to have the negative, so that you may print no more copies."

Maruki (who told me the story himself) was making a fine harvest out of the picture, and had no desire to part with it. "Your excellency will have to pay for the negative," he explained. "I know," the admiral replied, sadly; "what do you ask for it?"

Maruki considered for a moment, and then named what he thought would be a prohibitive price—20 yen. Togo sighed. "That is a great sum for a poor man like me to pay—but I must have the negative." So he counted out the money and carried off the picture.

"You ought to have presented it to me," I cried, indignantly, when I heard the story.

"Business is business," was Mr. Maruki's curt reply.

Indignation.

"Why are you so indignant toward that American art collector?"

"Because," answered the European picture owner, "he takes an unfair advantage. He presumes on his great wealth to offer me so much for a picture that I can't afford to refuse it."—Washington Star.

Posted.

"Now, boys," said the teacher, "can you tell me the most difficult thing to acquire in autoing?"

"The auto," came a chorus of yells. —Milwaukee Sentinel.

When a man wants to fight, don't hold him; just permit him to wade in and get what's coming to him before he changes his mind.

Some girls are so constituted that they imagine every strange man who glances at them is anxious to start a flirtation.

EDITORIALS

Opinions of Great Papers on Important Subjects.

SPELLING REFORM TENDENCIES.

A STUDY of spelling reform by F. Sturgis Allen shows that there is less evidence of change of spelling in British usage than there is in American. Shall we spell "aesthetic" or "esthetic"? British publishers do not take to the latter. On the other hand, "American publishers who publish for the British as well as the American market," Mr. Allen tells us, "find that adopting the e (which is considered an Americanism) tends to injure the sale of their books to the British trade." Considerable changes, he adds, are taking place in American usage in the direction of returning to British usage; as, for example, "honour" for "honor," "centre" for "center" and "traveller" for "traveler." After all, American publishers who want the widest market for books of a certain class have to consider the fastidious buyers in Australia, Canada, South Africa and other British colonies as well as in the United States. It thus happens that the personal interest of many bookmakers in this country run counter to the project of extended "spelling reform" endorsed by Mr. Carnegie. The typewriter and typesetting machines seem to be chiefly responsible for the common substitution for the diphthongs, as the machines would become much more complicated if they provided for them. "Should the dictionaries," Mr. Allen asks, "give the preference to 'e' forms when usage does not, without indicating that usage prefers the diphthong forms in those cases?" Usage, after all, is and should be the master. The time is past when dictionary makers could undertake to dictate.—Baltimore Sun.

FUTURE OF SAN FRANCISCO.

SAN FRANCISCO started to rebuild even before she had any assurance that she could establish herself more securely against further earthquakes. That showed the quality of her courage. It has, nevertheless, been giving her satisfaction to hear the testimony of earthquake experts and architects and builders to the effect that she can make her buildings strong enough to resist even worse shocks than they have experienced.

Professor Nakamura, of the Imperial University of Tokio, the architect sent by Japan to inspect conditions at San Francisco, reported some time ago that one of the great causes of damage had been the poor quality of mortar and the faulty construction with the use of hollow tiling and fire blocks instead of concrete. He gave the San Francisco people formulas for the kind of mortar which, according to Japanese experience, will resist shocks, and he told them that even brick buildings, if properly set in mortar, can be made proof against damage.

The writer on applied science in the current Forum adds his testimony as to the stability of the steel frame buildings, when properly braced and when established on sufficiently solid foundations. For the smaller buildings re-enforced concrete—that is, concrete with an imbedded metallic network—is approved for its resistance both to shock and to fire.

Even the light and water problems of San Francisco are said to be susceptible of entirely successful solutions, both from technical and from commercial standpoints. The substitution of electricity for gas will do away with one of the worst of the fire dangers—that coming from the gas mains the earthquake has broken. The water pipes can probably be made secure against the worst breaks by laying them on concrete foundations. Indirectly San Francisco is planning to make great conflagrations improbable hereafter by establishing a system of broad

boulevards, which the fire will not be apt to leap, even if the water supply is in part interrupted. Some of these boulevards are planned to be put through at once, others after five years and others after ten years.

San Francisco has every reason to feel confident that it is as safe as any other city, and much safer than many, against the recurrence of disaster with destructive results akin to those of last April.—Chicago Record Herald.

CHECKS ON PROSPERITY.

THE rich bear little of the general burden of taxation, in any country, proportionately to the poor. The British Chancellor of the Exchequer hints that an attempt will be made to throw the income tax more heavily on the rich. The Liberal party may also adopt the principle, practiced in several European countries, of taxing income from property more heavily than income based on effort. Prussia, Saxony and Wurtemberg tax income from property about three times as much as income from work, and Denmark twice as much. The principle is recognized in Italy. The only objection to a progressive income tax is the encouragement that it gives to perjury, and this objection it shares with the ordinary forms of taxing personal property. Income taxes, inheritance taxes, and laws in restraint of monopoly are all efforts, of course, toward the one goal of so arranging the laws that society shall grant to the individual only as much as is for the material and spiritual welfare of the race. Massachusetts has just declared, through her Supreme Court, that no person or body in that State shall make it a condition of sales that the purchaser shall not handle the goods of other dealers—a significant example of what is to be expected more every year in the direction of preventing the individual or the corporation from having too much in common with the supposed disposition of the much-wronged hog.—Collier's Weekly.

THE COLLEGE ADDRESSES.

WHEN a man is called upon to speak to college students, he usually weighs his words most carefully. However extreme a partisan may be in other circumstances, when setting forth his views in the presence of those who are learning about the great problems of life he strives to be judicial and fair-minded, consequently, the annual college addresses afford a distinct guide to what the leaders of thought really think.

Those addresses this year were remarkable for their cheerful optimism and for their faith in the honesty and uprightness of the men of the present generation. There were some exceptions, but the rule was that the young men about to begin the struggle for survival were told that the old-fashioned virtues have not gone out of style, that honesty and uprightness are still highly prized, that greed for gain is as despicable as it has always been, and that the road to success lies along the straight and narrow way which has commended itself to men by centuries of experience.

This word is needed. It is important that a true and wholesome standard shall be held up for admiration at the time when young men begin to find a standard necessary.

It is a most gratifying sign of the firmness of the moral foundations that neither the colleges nor the men whom they honor by invitations to speak have been swept from their feet by the tide of sordid accusations—too many, alas! proved—that has lately been flooding the country.—Youth's Companion.

THINK PLANTS HAVE EYES.

Scientists Thus Explain Why They Seek to Avoid the Sun's Glare.

Plants are by no means so stupid or so helpless as they commonly get credit for being. No matter how a beech happens to be placed in the ground, the root will turn down and the stem grow up into the air and there manage somehow or other to find its way to the nearest support.

Especially remarkable is the behavior of vegetables toward light. House plants, as every one knows, grow in the direction of the window, but if the pot be turned halfway round the leaves will nevertheless manage to screw themselves back into their old position, and the sunflower will "rubber round" all day long so as to stare at the sun. In temperate countries leaves grow at right angles to the rays of light to get as much of it as possible; in the tropics they set themselves edgewise to get as little.

Evidently, then, plants come at least as near seeing as do some animals. Pretty much all that has been known about the matter, however, is that they attend only to the blue rays of the sun; for though they will grow perfectly well in red or yellow light they show not the slightest inclination to turn toward it.

A German botanist, Haberlandt, who for many years has been studying these problems, has concluded that the whole upper surface of each leaf is a sort of compound eye. The thin, translucent skin which in most plants covers the green, succulent tissue of the leaf is itself, in certain cases, composed of innumerable rounded cells. These, thinks Professor Haberlandt, are so many minute lenses which concentrate the light upon the living substance below and enable the plant to distinguish between light and darkness, or between weak light and strong, though not, of course, to see objects. Such primitive lenses he finds in the fig, ivy, magnolia, wood-sorrel and other plants. Certain plants, like the pepper and the balsam, have in addition little eye spots which in structure approach the eyes of many of the simplest animals and appear, in a sense, to be real eyes.

At any rate, plants do act as if they could see and Professor Haberlandt has found that each of these supposed sense organs can be made to print a bright spot on a photographic plate.—Collier's.

PUTTING HIS FOOT IN IT.



Mrs. Skrappy—Oh! Why didn't I marry a sensible man? Skrappy—Because, madam, a sensible man would never have married you.

POLITE JAPANESE CHILDREN.

Japan is the country in which the word "boor," or an equivalent, is not needed. In that land habits of politeness begin to be formed with the first training of the child. Albert Tracy, in his "Rambles Through Japan," writes of what he observed in the most obscure parts of the country. Among the many things which he found to praise none is more pleasing than the fine courtesy of the children.

I saw some children emerging from school, and stopped on the opposite side of the street to look at them. They came out with none of the rude boisterousness which characterizes pupils at home, but walked sedately and quietly, with books and slates under their arms.

The first to come out were not a little startled, evidently, at seeing a bearded foreigner looking at them. They stopped a moment, and then, with a courtesy which I wish I could imagine possible in an English town or an American village, made an exceedingly respectful bow, and passed on. Of course I returned the salutation.

The next ones repeated their civility, and then as fast as the pupils came to the front they stopped and made profound reverences all along the line. It was a very pretty picture, and quite well illustrated the polite bearing of the Japanese, who are thus trained to civility from childhood.

Before a baby can speak, almost before it can totter alone, it is taught to lift the hand to the forehead on receiving a gift; and I never saw a child fail to make this signal of respect and gratitude without being reproved or reminded of the omission by some bystander.

At another place I came suddenly upon two pretty children who, approaching from the opposite direction, were completely taken by surprise, and had no opportunity to escape. Their faces showed that they were very much frightened, and the younger clung closely to his brother.

Just as I was about to speak they made the most profound of reverences, withal so prettily that I gave them each a penny, demonstrating, I hope, in their minds that even a white-faced barbarian is not dangerous if one is polite.

Everywhere.

The Preacher—And now, brethren, remember that we must all appear before that dread tribunal where all our misdeeds shall be brought to light.

The Hearer—Great Scott! Is this muck-raking being taken up by the churches, too?—Cleveland Leader.