

# TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

## A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

**Kissing a woman's lips is a gross insult in Finland.**

A herring lives the shortest time of any fish when taken out of water; carp and eel the greatest length of time.

When the Vatican recently received a thorough cleaning and some repairing was done the work employed 5,700 people.

During the lifetime of a healthy hen she will lay from 300 to 500 eggs. Her best laying capacity is during her second year.

Russia's cross of St. Andrew has a remarkable peculiarity attaching to it. All who are decorated with it have the right once to demand a pardon for a Russian subject condemned to death.

The Burmese have a curious idea regarding coins. They prefer those which have female heads on them, believing that coins with male heads on them are not so lucky and do not make money.

A curious barometer used in Germany and Switzerland consists of a jar of water, with a frog and a little stepladder in it. When the frog comes out of the water and sits on the steps it is said infallibly to foretell rain.

The women of Sumatra wear costly dresses, many of them being made of pure gold and silver. After the metal is mined and smelted, it is formed into a fine wire, which is woven into cloth and afterward used for dresses.

"Flower-name weddings" are fashionable in Europe just now. At one recently, where the bride's name was Violet, the bridesmaids wore Parma violet-colored satin dresses, with velvet capes of darker shade and hats to match. They carried bouquets of Parma violets.

Children in Italy are not allowed to rub their eyes. When an infant bursts into tears, no effort is made to repress the emotion, but the youngster is allowed to have its cry out. It is asserted that this benefits the eyes and makes them clear, while rubbing the eyes injures them in many ways.

This Kaffir story is true. A Christian Zulu-Kaffir was heard recouffing to another Kaffir a vision of heaven which he had had in a dream. "And saw you any Kaffirs there?" inquired his listener. The teller of the story pondered a while, and then "No," said he, "for I did not look into the kitchen."

A Paris jeweler has bought a large number of stones which have been found in mines on the Czar's private property. Every year stones from these mines are offered for sale by tender, in the same way as the forest lands and mines belonging to the Czar are occasionally sold by the Imperial cabinet.

In some parts of Brittany a curious marriage custom prevails. On certain fete days the marriageable girls appear in red petticoats, with white or yellow borders round them. The number of borders denotes the portion the father is willing to give his daughter. Each white band denotes 100 francs per annum, each yellow band represents 1,000 francs a year.

In Sumatra the wind decides the length of time a widow shall remain single. Just after her husband's death she plants a flagstaff at her door, upon which a flag is raised. While the flag remains untorn by the wind the etiquette of Sumatra forbids her to marry; but at the first rent, however tiny, she can lay aside her weeds and accept the first man who presents himself.

Passerby have often been struck by the fact that the chief cornice at one end of Lord Rothschild's house in Piccadilly, London, has been left unfinished. It is said that Jewish tradition insists that some part of a Jewish house shall be left incomplete. In order that the incompleteness may remind its owner that, like his father Abraham, he is only a stranger on the earth.

Dr. Zamenhof, the inventor of Esperanto, went through a trying ordeal at the conclusion of the recent Esperanto congress at Geneva. Hundreds of the departing delegates shook him by the hand, hundreds more embraced him with every show of affection. This he bore with patience. But when the Esperantists of the other sex insisted on kissing him good-by, the fortitude that had stood by him so well throughout the conference deserted him. He broke down.

### OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

#### What Form of Recreation Shall Be Permitted on the Sabbath?

The Sunday observance question has thrust itself forward with more than usual determination. Many explanations might be given for this, but if we were to attempt to account for the fact in a general way we should say that the reason is to be looked for in the larger use of Sunday for purposes of recreation by those whose instruments of pleasure do not come into use under the ban, says the New Haven Register. We have no comment to make upon Sunday automobiling from the standpoint of either propriety or impropriety, but we should have to admit that indulgence in it has whetted the appetite of those, who are without cars, but who have other means, more attractive of seeking recreation, for more freedom of choice.

The bothersome feature of this growing controversy is the establishment of the point at which recreation becomes legitimate, and unless we are mistaken it will be more bothersome yet; that is, before the question of

right is settled. A gentleman who realizes that the Sunday of his generation is more flexible than the Sunday of his father and would probably convince his grandfather that his is a godless generation, admits that further concessions will doubtless have to be made, but that beyond a certain point license should not be permitted to go. Neither he nor any other man living is able to state what that certain point is, except to lay down the defensible proposition that no form of recreation shall be permitted which deprives others of their rights and which creates manifest disorderliness. Still another gentleman, who has lived through several controversies on a somewhat similar character, regards the whole thing as a perfectly natural outburst of popular will, and as sure to settle itself according to the great common sense of the American people. We do not understand that any one wishes the anarchistic proposition enforced that all government oversight shall be withdrawn. What most earnest people want is a general recognition of the rights and needs of society from the point of view of all the factors and agencies which should count; not the recognition of the rights of one class as compared with the rights of another class, a task much more simple than it appears on the surface of things.

One will read the appeal of Admiral Evans in behalf of his men for a more liberal interpretation of their shore rights on Sunday after morning service with the feeling that his purpose is a humane one, and not at all an irreverent one. We at least believe that this will be the feeling of the average man. He says: "It is well known that where several hundred men are confined in such narrow limits as the ship, where the means of diversion are few, that all are desirous of taking advantage of any opportunity which will enable them to have a run on shore." From this point Admiral Evans argues, and argues effectively, for the right of the Jackies to indulge in field sports when ashore upon that day. As he says, it would be much better for a town like Provincetown to accede to the wishes of the men, than to have 2,000 or 3,000 of them roaming about the streets in absolute idleness. It is a very narrow outlook, as it seems to us, which would overlook the moral and physical aspects of this case for no better purpose than to enforce arbitrary views, while the case itself is more or less typical of the needs which exist in all large centers of population during the larger number of months in the year. It may be regrettable that the necessity of a more liberal Sunday must be considered at all, but human nature has to be treated in a human way, whether individuals think so or not.

### SOIL FERTILIZERS.

#### \$50,000,000 Spent Annually in United States for Fertilizers.

Elaborate tests have been made at many of the stations, particularly in the East and in the South, in order to determine the value or the worthlessness of soil fertilizers, says the American Illustrated Magazine. While the use of bacteria for inoculation may ultimately do away with all need of fertilization, yet large amounts are still spent upon commercial fertilizers, and it will probably be some time before they shall be all abandoned. In fact, something like \$50,000,000 is annually paid out by the farmers of the United States for fertilizers. It is unquestionably true that much fraud has been practiced upon the farmers in this direction. In New Jersey the station showed the farmers that by clubbing together and purchasing the raw material of which the fertilizers are composed they could save from 25 to 45 per cent. The estimated saving in cost to the farmers of the State by this one feature alone is from \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year. This station has also demonstrated the special food needs of certain plants, showing the farmer what particular type of fertilizer was needed for a given crop. Instead of purchasing manures from New York and Philadelphia for fertilizing sweet potato ground, as had been the custom, the station advised a combination of various fertilizers as likely to give the precise food the sweet potato needed to bring about the most satisfactory results. More than 20,000 acres of ground in New Jersey are given up to the cultivation of the sweet potato and the cost of production has thus been lessened by from five dollars to ten dollars per acre, making an annual saving of nearly, or quite, \$200,000. In this station, as in many other stations, the information given the farmers in the way of methods of preventing insect pests results in a saving of thousands of dollars a year. Without the aid of the stations, orchards and vegetable tracts as well, indeed, in some cases entire field crop areas would be destroyed. It is this constant searching for the negative advantages, so to call them, that marks one of the most significant functions of the stations.

### Waste.

"What is the use of wasting your vote on a candidate who can't be elected?"

"Well," answered Farmer Cornutusel, "when I vote for a candidate who gets elected he doesn't do what was mapped out for him. The vote's liable to be wasted anyhow."—Washington Star.

Instead of running away from your work try to find an easier way of doing it. That's one of the secrets of success.

The man who gets blue over trifles is apt to alter the color scheme by painting things red.



## THE LITTLE BOY.

"Come here, Johnny; I'd like to commune with you a little," said the nice old gentleman to the little boy, who was scowling at a bowl of bread and milk over the table. "Mercy me! Don't stick your lip out that way. Tink how dreadful it would be if you trod on it. What's the matter?"

The small boy shook himself as the nice old gentleman laid his grand-paternal hand on his shoulder.

"Tut, tut!" said the old gentleman. "You mustn't act like that. Has somebody been hurting your feelings? Yes? Well, well! Strap or slipper, Johnny?"

"He spanked me," said the little boy, with a slight snivel.

"That's too bad!" said the old gentleman, sympathetically. "Still, it's not so bad as it might have been. I thought it was going to be the strap. That was my guess. Don't you think you deserved spanking?"

The little boy shook his head.

"That alters the case," said the old gentleman. "If you don't think you had a licking coming to you've probably been badly treated. You're the best judge of the matter. I am surprised that your father should have so far forgotten what was due to himself and you as to do such a thing. I don't think you ought to stand it. Sometimes parents need to be taught a lesson. I see you're short on rations, too. Aren't you going to eat your bread and milk?"

"Don't want it," said the little boy.

"Don't you eat it then," counseled the old gentleman. "I'll eat it for you as soon as I've finished this pipe. I don't blame you for feeling mad. I'd be mad myself if somebody spanked me and I didn't deserve it. I knew a boy once who ran away from home for that. All he did was to heat a stove poker in the fire till it got red hot and make marks on the mahogany sideboard with it. His father spanked him for that and he ran away from home."

"Where'd he go?" asked the little boy.

"He went out west," replied the old gentleman. "Way out west, where the buffaloes and bears and Indians are. He had a slingshot along with him and when he got hungry he slingshot a buffalo and ate it."

"He couldn't kill a buffalo with a

slingshot," said the little boy, incredulously.

"You can if you hit 'em just a certain place," said the old gentleman. "If you take a buckshot greased with mutton tallow and shoot it into the tender spot on the spinal column, an inch and a quarter in front of the hump and a little to the right of the base of the brain, you'll drop him every time."

"You can't eat a whole buffalo, anyway," objected the boy.

"Did I say he ate a whole buffalo? Certainly not. If he ate half of one he was doing well. But it was lucky he had that slingshot along with him, because the bears got after him and—By the way, Johnny, I don't want you to take your slingshot to the park and try it on the buffaloes."

"Why not?"

"Because the park policeman doesn't like to have them killed. It makes him mad. Another thing, the mutton tallow you grease the shot with wants to come from a 4-year-old black sheep that hasn't been killed more than fifteen minutes. But about this boy. His parents were awful sorry they had spanked him when they found out that he had run away and gone west."

"Which way do you go to start west?"

"You go to the ticket office and tell the ticket seller you want to go to kill Indians and they'll give you a ticket free if they don't think you're too young or that you're a crazy person. This boy was about your age. He thought he'd run away and be a pirate at first, but then he thought it would be more fun to kill Indians. But, unfortunately, the Indians caught him and they tied him up with calumets and they heated wampum in the fire till it was red hot and made marks all over him the same as he had done with the furniture. Then they sent him home and his father took the strap to him."

"I don't believe it," said the little boy.

"Neither do I—not all of it," said the old gentleman. "But I do believe that the next time you get out your water-color paints and paint the etchings in your father's books you'll get more than that boy did. Now, do you want me to eat your bread and milk for you?"

"I guess I'll eat it," said the little boy.—Chicago Daily News.

## GOOD Short Stories

There was a poor lady who hastened to the nursery, saying to her little daughter: "Minnie, what do you mean by shouting and screaming? Play quietly, like Tommy. See, he doesn't make a sound." "Of course he doesn't," said the little girl. "That is our game. He is papa coming home late, and I am you."

A poor lady whose husband had just failed was bemoaning the fact. "At any rate," she said, as she wiped the tears from her eyes, "the Brown failure was worse than ours." "How so?" said one who knew that her husband's smash-up had been terrible. "Way," she said, "we only failed for 5 cents on the dollar, whereas Mr. Brown failed for 55."

A police captain was about to raid a gambling den. At midnight, taking his place at the head of a squad of stalwart men, he looked them over closely, and then said to his lieutenant: "Is everything ready for this raid?" "Yes, sir," replied the lieutenant, saluting. "Our arms are in first-rate order, here are the reporters, there are the flashlight camera men, and I notified the proprietor of the place this afternoon."

A well known comedian one day while fulfilling an engagement in Dublin was walking with his wife, a remarkably stout lady, when an Irish woman with a basket brushed rudely against her. "You had better walk over me," said the comedian's wife, irritably. The Irish woman turned round, coolly surveyed her from head to foot, and then replied, "Faith, nun, it would be easier to walk over ye than round ye, annyway!"

A company was playing "She Stoops to Conquer" in a small western town last winter, when a man without any money, wishing to see the show, stepped up to the box office and said: "Pass me in, please." The box office man gave a loud, harsh laugh. "Pass you in, what for?" he asked. The applicant drew himself up and answered haughtily: "What for? Why, because I am Oliver Goldsmith, author of the play." "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," replied the other in a shocked voice, as he hurriedly wrote out an order for a box.

Butcher Ludwig was continually being robbed of meat by a large black tomcat belonging to a next door neighbor. Finally his temper got the best of him, and he poisoned the cat. The cat's owner, the next morning, found his large black cat lying dead before his door. He knew at once who had done the killing, and with a low, bitter oath he took the dead cat up by the

### KNUCKLE CALENDAR.

#### Hard to Tell Short Months if You Have Forgotten the Jingle.

"We can't always remember which are the short months of the year, or some of us can't anyway, and then," said a man who is not very strong in memory, "we take to repeating the old jingle, 'Thirty days hath September, April, June and November,' and so on, to bring the short months to us. But I have just learned another way that pleases me.

"If you double up your fist and hold it with the back of the hand upward you will see the four knuckles of the hand standing up in little prominences with little depressions between the bases of the fingers.

"Now, if you will start ticking off the months on these prominences and depressions, one for each prominence and one for each depression, in regular order, you will find the long months all come on the high places and the short months all in the low ones.

"First knuckle, high place, January; first depression, low place, February; next knuckle, March; next depression, April; next knuckle, May; next low place June; and then the fourth and last knuckle, July. Then you come back to the first knuckle and start over again: High place, August, and the first depression September; next knuckle, October; next depression, November, and the next knuckle, December.

"If you should forget even the 'thirty days' jingle, count the months off on the back of your doubled up hand in this way and you can't go astray. You will find the short months all coming in the little valleys between the knuckles. 'Mountain and Valley' the young folks call this."

### HANDY POWER.

The electric railway has many advantages over the old horse systems and over cable roads that are apparent to the wayfarer. One of its greatest advantages, however, says the Technical World Magazine, is one which escapes the notice of the non-mechanical person. This is the ease with which the power in the trolley wire can be used for all manner of construction and repair work. One of the most interesting appliances thus used is that for rail-laying. It includes a portable melting furnace, a sand-blast machine, power drills and riveters. To prepare the rails for laying, a sand-blast is used to clean the surfaces where electric connection is to be made. The blast is electrically driven.

When the rails are cleaned and the fish-plates applied, compressed-air riveters are clamped on and air is fed to them from electrically driven blowers, the power being taken from the wire overhead. A pneumatic drill similarly supplied is used to bore extra holes. A cold saw for cutting odd lengths of rail is driven directly by an electric motor.

Each apparatus is so light that it can be put in a wheelbarrow and trundled by hand along the line to the point where it is needed. The melting furnace for the "cast-weld" joint is, of course, heavier. It is on a motor-driven truck, and is provided with a blast from an electric blower.

For breaking joints in old track a portable drop-hammer run by electricity is used. It weighs 1,600 pounds, and falls 17 feet. It is run by an electric winch, operated by the man who runs the car.

For grinding welded joints an emery-wheel run by a motor is carried, and can be trundled along in a wheelbarrow to the required point, where a wire on a fishpole is hung over the trolley wire for power.

Lamp-stands to light the streets for night work have similar fishpole connections. Rails and ties are carried about in electric flat cars, and coal for the power-house in box cars, as is sand and other bulky freight. Practically the only apparatus not depending on the trolley wire is the big road roller, which is used for the pavements alongside the track, and even that is towed from place to place by an electric motor.

### Odd Native of Oklahoma.

There lives in the timbered sections of Southwestern Oklahoma and in prairie dog towns of the Southwest generally a peculiar little animal that the settlers have named the "hydrophobia skunk." The name is not inappropriate, for it has been observed that where medical assistance or other forms of relief have not been resorted to persons and animals that are victims of the little animal's bite become affected with the disease that mad dogs scatter.

The "hydrophobia skunk" is not larger than an ordinary prairie dog and hardly so long as that animal. Its color is like that of the ordinary skunk, its hair is soft and the appearance of its head and teeth is not dissimilar in many respects to the larger species of skunk.

One night recently the little daughter of W. J. Greer was awakened about 4 o'clock in the morning with a peculiar stinging sensation on her cheek. Her screams aroused her father and when he reached her bedside she was hugging a "hydrophobia skunk" close to her breast. Upon examination it was found that the animal had bitten her on the chin and on the left cheek. The animal was thrown into the yard and a dog killed it.—St. Louis Republic.

In the various walks of life some people have a walk-over and others get walked on.

### "TELEPHONITIS."

Mrs. Penrose was vexed. She had taken Renard, her husband's fox terrier, to her mother's for a morning visit, and now after an hour at home she discovered that he had not returned with her. Although Mrs. Penrose liked all animals, she sometimes found the care of Renard a burden. This noon it seemed particularly annoying to have to start out in the hot sun in search of a mislaid dog.

Just as she was about to leave the house, it occurred to her that she was not at all sure that Renard was at her mother's, for she could not remember whether he had started home with her. She stepped to the telephone, and in a moment was asking her mother if Renard was there.

"Yes, he's here," was the answer.

"Well, I wish he'd come home," sighed Mrs. Penrose.

"Why don't you tell him so?" returned her mother. "I'll hold him up to the phone and you can call him."

"Come, Renard, here, Reny, home, sir, come, Renard, come, Reny!" coaxed Mrs. Penrose.

"Don't call him any more," laughed her mother. "He jumped out of my arms almost at the first sound of your voice and crashed through the screen door. I'm sure he's half-way home by this time."

It was only a few minutes later that Renard, with an air of brisk excitement, rushed barking on to the porch of his master's house, and scratched the front door peremptorily.

"Good doggy! Nice Renard!" said Mrs. Penrose as he frisked about her when she let him in, and there was a wag of conscious pride in his stubby tail.

Later in the day Mrs. Penrose phoned her mother that Renard had returned safely.

"Let me see if he will come over here."

Renard responded to her invitation as promptly as he had obeyed the summons home, and after that the two ladies had much amusement calling him by phone from one house to the other. "Renard looks very thin," observed Mr. Penrose a few weeks later. "Do you think he feels the heat?"

"He is being worn to a frazzle by the telephone," replied Mrs. Penrose. "He's got so now that every time he hears it ring, he rushes off to mother's, and if he is there when her phone rings he hurries back here; and as we are both on party lines, the poor dog spends most of his time running between the two houses."

"We'll have to take him to a rest cure where there are no telephones," laughingly suggested Mr. Penrose, and a week afterward Renard found himself enjoying pure country air on an out-of-the-way farm, where the whirl of the moving machine and the songs of birds were the only sounds to disturb his dogship.

### Not an Observing Class.

Professor Claparde of a Swiss university recently asked a class of fifty-four students eight simple questions concerning the rooms they daily visited at the school. "Are the columns in the vestibule round or square?" "Is there a window facing the door-keeper's box?" "Is the ceiling in the large amphitheater plain or decorated?" and so on. Forty-five of the fifty-four students declared there was no window at all; eight remembered that there was a window, but each and all attributed a wrong situation to it; one, more sincere than his fellows, candidly owned that he had not the least idea whether there was a window or not. As regards the shape of the columns in the vestibule, only six answers were correct.

By way of continuing the experiment one day a man conspicuously costumed suddenly burst into the class room, where he performed certain antics and uttered certain emphatic phrases prearranged with the professor. He was then thrust out of the door as if he had been an ordinary unauthorized intruder. Here was a scene eminently calculated by reason of its strangeness and unexpectedness to impress the imagination of the students.

A few days later, on some pretext or other, Professor Claparde asked his pupils to describe to the best of their recollections the person and acts of the masked man. Out of the twenty-two students who had been present on the occasion only four described the man accurately. The rest either admitted that their recollection of the scene was absolutely at fault or gave such a description that it might have applied to anybody rather than the correct person.—Grand Magazine.

### Her Sun Spots.

Sir Robert Ball on one occasion, after delivering a lecture on "Sun Spots and Solar Chemistry" met a young lady who expressed her regret that she had missed hearing him on the previous evening. "Well, you see," he said, "I don't know that it would have interested you particularly, as it was all about sun spots." "Why," she replied, "it would have interested me extremely, for I have been a martyr to freckles all my life."

### Chrysanthemum Smoking.

Chrysanthemum smoking is the latest thing in England. Cigarettes made of chrysanthemum leaves and cascarrilla bark have been found to give relief in cases of epilepsy, and one doctor recommends them as a substitute for tobacco.

Beware of the girl with a marble heart, young man. Even cold cash can warm it up only temporarily.