

# Topics of the Times

The deserts of the earth cover 4,180,000 square miles.

Immigration seems to be on the decline, at least temporarily.

Plants grow faster between 4 and 6 a. m. than at any other time during the day.

At an elevation of ten feet the horizon is slightly more than ten miles away in perfectly level land or at sea.

If all the oceans were suddenly dried up, and the rivers could maintain their present rate of flow, it would take 3,500 years to refill the basin.

The total number of patents issued in all countries which thus protect their inventors from the earliest time to December 1, 1903, was 2,999,433.

Coal dealers' books show that the consumption of coal for the winter in New York City will amount to one ton for each inhabitant, or about 4,300,000 tons in all.

A German scientist has invented a so-called duplex compass which by indicating the horizontal intensity of the earth's magnetism gives the approximate longitude and latitude of any place where it may be used.

Lord Granard was once visiting some of his tenants. One of the farms he visited contained a large assortment of live stock in a more than usually healthy state, and halting before a sty he said to the owner: "Those pigs of yours are in very fine condition." "Yes," agreed the proud farmer, "if we were all as ready to die as them, my lord, we'd do."—Tit-Bits.

Cardinal Rampolla, in answer to a letter of inquiry as to the Charlemagne manuscript which was recently discovered by him in the Vatican, says: "There can be no doubt as to its genuineness. It is well known also that he had often expressed himself in poetry, and a good example of his composition and style is the epitaph on Pope Stephen. The discovered document is an elegy on the death of his son, written in Latin, and when found was in two pieces, the joining of which was a laborious task."

One of the New Jersey representatives in Congress, very much addicted to apparel of the variety known as "loud," was on his way to the capitol one day when he encountered Senator Depew. "If you're going to the capitol," said the Senator, "we might as well walk together." "I'm not going there just yet," said the representative. "I must first stop to see my tailor about a new overcoat." "The tailor!" exclaimed Mr. Depew, in mock astonishment. "Why, Jim, it has always been my understanding that you were clothed by a costumer."—Cleveland Leader.

Work on the New York State barge canal goes on in a satisfactory manner, and it seems likely, says the Scientific American, that the great undertaking will be completed only within the contract time, but within the contract price (\$101,000,000) as well. Work reaching \$16,000,000 has already been done, and the work under contract now aggregates \$54,138,323. The estimate for this work made in 1903 was over \$2,500,000 in excess of the above figure. These contracts cover 314 miles of canal (the total length of which will be 442 miles). Fifteen of the fifty-four locks are practically finished.

The question of a canal from the Atlantic ocean to the Mediterranean sea is up again, or was recently, in the French chamber of deputies. The naval as well as commercial value of such a canal to France is obvious. One of the deputies, M. Senac, declared that it would be worth at least a full squadron of battleships to the navy. Its estimated cost is \$150,000,000, with a width of 160 feet and a depth of thirty-five. These dimensions would make the canal a rather close fit for the "compromiseless" naval vessel (toward which the world seems steadily moving) of forty thousand tons or thereabouts.

In his report on the cavalry operations of last year on Salisbury Plain, issued by the British war office, Lieutenant General Sir Douglas Haig attributes "great importance to young officers being encouraged to hunt and play polo, and would urge that they should be helped to do so in every way possible." "These pursuits," the general adds, "have a very real value as training for war, and it is particularly desirable that officers with private means should be encouraged to spend their money in this way rather than in buying expensive motor cars and similar luxuries, which have an opposite tendency."

## GLOWWORM A BEETLE.

**Insect Feeds on Snails—The Source and Nature of Its Light.**

M. J. H. Fabre, the famous French entomologist, has recently been studying the glowworm. M. Fabre, according to the London Globe, that both male and female are luminous, although in the former the light is much feebler. Even the eggs and the larvae are faintly luminous. The light is produced on the last three segments of the abdomen.

It may perhaps be worth while pointing out that the glowworm is not a worm, but an insect belonging to the great order of beetles, the coleoptera. The mistaken name no doubt arises from the fact that the female is grublike in form, without either wings or elytra, and so singularly unlike a typical beetle. The male, however, possesses both and flies swiftly. Luminosity among insects indeed is chiefly found in the beetle order. The

Mexican fireflies (pyroporus), for example, are beetles. Some of them give sufficient light to read by. Water-ton sometimes used them in his way to write up his diary when wandering in the South American forests.

In adult life the glowworm is a vegetarian, feeding on tender leaves of plants, but while a grub it is carnivorous, feeding on snails and slugs. The light of the glowworm and fireflies has been called phosphorescent and attributed to phosphorus. One investigator, Jousset de Belleme, has stated his conviction that it is phosphoretic hydrogen gas stored up in the cellular tissues and in communication with the nervous and respiratory systems.

M. Fabre, however, finds that phosphorus does not enter into the composition of the luminous substance of the glowworm. Under the microscope it is seen to be a sort of white plaster covering the epidermis and full of branching tubes. These, according to M. Fabre, supply the plaster with oxygen and so render it luminous. Thus the light is caused by the oxidization of something the nature of which the great naturalist has not yet been able to determine.

According to M. Fabre's observation the light is caused by the supply of oxygen which is under the control of the animal's breathing apparatus. Thus the glowworm can start, in crease or extinguish the light at will. It has often indeed been observed to diminish or extinguish its light when approached. Gilbert White has an interesting note on this point. Observing two which had been brought into the garden he found that they put out their lamps between 11 and 12 and shone no more for the rest of the night. It would appear, then, that whatever the nature of the luminous substance this is only active when supplied with oxygen by the animal.

However produced, it is said that the light of firefly and glowworm is the most economical known. Economical, that is, in the sense that the greater part of the energy expended in producing it really appears as light. In the very best artificial system of lighting yet invented only a small percentage of the energy expended on its production is turned into light, the rest appearing as heat and other invisible vibrations.

## INSPIRED A PEOPLE'S PALACE.

**It Is the People's Practical Anti-Saloon Expression in Jersey City.**

The People's Palace of Jersey City shows the method of the up-to-date church. It was built by a generous business man, Joseph Milbank, and planned and managed by the Rev. John L. Scudder, pastor of the First Congregational Church, says the Delawarean. Years ago Mr. Scudder read Sir Walter Besant's novel, "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," in which the idea of a people's palace was elucidated. Mr. Scudder determined to build such a palace. Mr. Scudder not only makes the People's Palace self-supporting, but he makes it earn money to expand. The first \$75,000 the generous millionaire gave he frankly declared he expected to lose outright. Six months after the place was built Mr. Scudder informed him that the treasury was ahead \$4,000.

The People's Palace is essentially an anti-saloon expression. Most pool and billiard rooms have bar attachments; hence the People's Palace has the largest pool and billiard rooms, with the best equipment, in Jersey City, and the players are charged less than the saloon rate. Bowling alleys are there for similar reasons. Lodges and trades unions, too, often hold their meetings over saloons.

A most beautiful lodgeroom, perfect in its equipment, it attached to the institution. The rent is lower than is commonly paid for much poorer quarters. Every one knows the destructive and vicious influences surrounding the dance halls of great cities. In most places a social club can get a hall rent free, the proprietor only standing out for the bar privilege. The People's Palace has two large dancing halls with smooth and polished floors, music played by electricity and side rooms for ice cream and light refreshments. It has one of the finest gymnasiums in the world, a most complete theater, rifle and pistol ranges, a library, indoor and outdoor tennis and provision for all forms of legitimate recreation. Membership fees are so low that almost anybody can belong. The Palace is open to everybody, men, women and children alike. And "everybody" comes. Across the street is the church, but no one is expected to attend its services because he belongs to the Palace. "Play here," says Mr. Scudder, "or pray there, just as you choose, but, anyhow, keep away from the saloon and the gambling den."

## Appreciative.

A housekeeper who has been employing a colored washerwoman for several months, was surprised to see her appear last week in a hat trimmed heavily with crapes.

"Why, Julia," she asked, "is any of your family dead?"

"No, no," was the reply, "but one of my best customers gave me this hat, and I didn't want her to think I don't appreciate nothin'."

## Acquaintances.

"Do you see that old gentleman, mamma? He often speaks to me."

"Does he, darling? What does he say?"

"Oh, he says, 'Don't you throw stones at my dog.'—Throne and Country.

Women often say of a man who is perfectly sober: "That man is drunk!"

Some actresses seem to think variety is the spice of matrimony.



## Two Puzzles.

1. How long would it take to divide completely a two-foot block of ice by means of a piece of wire on which a weight of five pounds hangs?

Solution: A block of ice would never be divided completely by a loop of wire on which hangs a five-pound weight. For as the wire works its way through, the slit closes up by refreezing, and the weight falls to the ground with the wire, leaving the ice still in a single block.

2. Two men, standing on the bank of a broad stream, across which they could not cast their fishing lines, could not agree as to its width. A bet on the point was offered and accepted, and the question was presently decided for them by an ingenious friend who came along, without any particular appliances for measurement.

He stood on the edge of the bank, steadied his chin with one hand, and with the other tilted his cap on his head till its peak just cut the top of the opposite bank.

Then, turning round, he stood exactly where the peak cut the level ground behind him, and by stepping to that spot was able to measure a distance equal to the width of the stream.

## The Mystery.



Elizabeth and Mary are the most peculiar girls! Elizabeth has braided hair and Mary bobbing curls; But that's the only difference between the happy pair, And when you see the swinging braid you know the curls are there. They live across the roadway and they wave a fond "good-night," And they call across "good-morning," at the very earliest light. They do their work together and they study and they play, And they have to see each other at least twenty times a day!

They talk and laugh and chatter till you'd think that they had said Every single thing that could be found within a small girl's head. But when they sleep together after talking all the day They have to wake each other up—they have so much to say! You'll scarce believe this story, but in all the tongues we speak, Whether French or German, English, Latin, Portuguese or Greek, Sufficient words are lacking, and a language all their own Has this clever pair invented for their use when all alone!

They let me hear it one day, and my brain it simply whirled To hear them glibly saying each unutterable word! Yet they tell me Mary cannot learn a single Latin noun— And Elizabeth in German has been seven times sent down! When I ask them if they'll kindly clear the matter up for me They simply stand and giggle, and then say, "Why, don't you see?" I know they think me stupid, though they're always most polite, And they sometimes come and tell me when they've had a little fight.

I see them walking slowly with their heads an inch apart— I find them in the orchard cutting up an apple tart; I see them making bonfires or a very shaky swing, And I fear I sometimes hear them when they're madly quarreling! But what I really want to know and never can find out Is what on earth that couple has to talk so much about! —George Phillips.

## Buried Treasure.

Once upon a time there was a cluster of cottages on a mountain side, and the people who lived there were so very poor that often they had nothing at all to eat. In the summer the children stayed their hunger on the wild strawberries they found in the valleys. The land was so fertile that blackberries grew almost as big as plums, and the little people were as busy as the squirrels when autumn came in, storing up nuts for winter use. When these were exhausted and the keen north winds blew in from the sea, they huddled together in the fireless hovels they called their homes, and cried so bitterly with the cold that the sound of their weeping reached a wise old Brownie.

Now, the Brownie loved little children better than all the rest of the world, and he did his best to help them by whispering into their frost-bitten ears what fun it would be to run races in the snow. When they did this they were quite warm, but the poor little things were too weak to run about for long, and soon were as cold again as ever.

When the frost-bound earth began to soften, the wise old Brownie made up his mind that next winter they should be better off. So he dressed himself up as a gray-haired witch, and, mounting upon a broomstick, rode off to the sunny slope where the

children's fathers were idling away their time.

"If you were to dig that land," he told them, pointing down to the fertile valley, "you would come across buried treasure, and be rich men. You could wear fine clothes then, like the men in other villages, and your wives would have brave new gowns, instead of rags."

Then he flew away on his broomstick to a belt of fir-trees, and waited to see what would happen next.

At first no one seemed inclined to hunt for the buried treasure; they were accustomed, you see, to doing just nothing at all. But after a while the wife of one of them, who had overheard what the Brownie said, borrowed a spade and began to dig in the valley, and, not to be outdone, they all followed her example.

They dug and dug, but still no treasure appeared; and one day the least dull of them suggested that, as the ground was now so well prepared, it would do no harm to turn it into a garden.

A neighboring farmer, who had often pitied their poverty, generously gave them potatoes and seeds, and soon there was a big market garden where there had been only wild flowers and weeds. So fine were the crops that grew there that when they were taken to market they fetched a good price, and though the mountain folk found no buried treasure, when winter came there was gold and silver in the old wives' stockings, and the children were warmly clad.

When the Brownie paid them another visit, they greeted him with a storm of howls.

"Where is the treasure you spoke of?" they demanded, showing their fists; but the Brownie only chuckled. The fruits of the earth were the treasure that he had thought of, and now that through him the idlers had learnt to be industrious, he was well content. —Chicago News.

## Birthdays in China.

In China all the boys born during the year have their birthday celebrated on the same day, no matter what date the real birthday is. It is a great occasion, for the Chinese banners are hung out and processions take place. How would you like it if all children in this country had their birthdays in the same way, and had one great big birthday party instead of many little ones?

## COULD NOT GET RID OF BOXES.

**They Were So Large No One Would Move Them.**

Once there was a man who came into possession of some boxes. Nothing funny in that? Of course not. Anybody who had a chance to get some nice packing boxes would have been as glad as he was.

"They're big ones," said the friend who gave them to him, and the recipient laughed happily.

"The bigger the better," he said, merrily. "I'll send down to the place and get 'em this afternoon."

That afternoon he approached a move wagon man and told him he had fourteen packing cases to be moved, and asked what he would charge. The move wagon man took a stub of pencil and made a calculation based upon usual charges of 25 cents a box, and finally agreed to move them for \$2.50 as a whole. The box owner then went home and waited for his boxes. At last he called up the place where the boxes had been stored. The owner of the storeroom was angry. He more than intimated that the boxes were in the way and suggested that the owner come down and take them away. The move wagon man had come, seen and departed, shaking his head.

The owner then went down to straighten out the matter. He found that the boxes were indeed large. One was a little fellow eight feet square, while the others could have held a couple of square pianos apiece. They were foreign-built boxes, dovetailed and firm, and built with screws and cleats and plainly intended to remain boxes.

"This ain't no lumber yard," suggested the man who had the storeroom. "You'll have to get 'em out this afternoon. I need the room."

Then the owner worked the telephone frantically in search of a purchaser. By 4 o'clock three people had called, looked at the boxes and taken fright. They were very large boxes. By 5 o'clock the owner was trying to give the boxes away. One man agreed to take them, and he was happy until the man called up and, remarking that he didn't bargain to remove houses, threw up the job. At 6 o'clock he nearly had a fight with the owner of the storeroom, and it ended in the box owner hiring a negro at 50 cents an hour to make lumber of the boxes, and hiring a move wagon at \$2 a trip to haul the lumber away. When he came to analyze the situation he found he had bought \$3 worth of second-hand, nail-studded lumber of odd sizes, and had paid \$4.50 for it.

## When the Trouble Began.

"A couple," said Mrs. Simpkins, "got married a few days ago after a courtship which had lasted fifty years."

"I suppose," replied Mr. Simpkins, "the poor old man had become too feeble to hold out any longer."—Illustrated Bits.

## Sad Work.

"I see where a man who never smiled is dead."

"What business was he in?"

"He wrote ragtime music."

"Ah! That explains a great deal." —Birmingham Age-Herald.

It's difficult to arouse a man's enthusiasm by showing him a photograph of himself when a baby.

## ANCIENTS SURPASSED US.

**Many Secrets They Possessed Are Lost to Modern Times.**

Many secrets the ancients possessed are lost to modern times and many things they did cannot be equaled today. Thousands of years ago the Egyptians used to embalm the bodies of their dead kings and nobility so perfectly that the bodies are in wonderful preservation to-day, as may be seen at the British museum. Clever as we are in this age, we cannot do the same. The valuable secret is lost, and modern science cannot recover the lost knowledge. Bodies embalmed nowadays will not be preserved for more than a few years at most; very many of the bodies of Egyptians embalmed before the birth of Christ are still so perfect that the lines of the faces are marked as clearly as when they were first embalmed.

Sheffield turns out the finest, hardest and most perfect steel the world produces, but Sheffield cannot produce a sword blade to compare with those the Saracens made and used hundreds of years ago, and the Saracens never possessed the machinery we have, nor had the advantage of knowing so much about metals as we are supposed to know. A huge fortune awaits the man who discovers the secret which enabled the Saracens to make sword blades so keen and hard that they would cut in two most of the swords used in our army to-day.

There are a dozen different methods of making artificial diamonds, but none of the stones produced by these methods can compare with those made of old French paste, the secret of which is lost. So perfect were paste diamonds that it was difficult for even a person with expert knowledge of diamonds to tell that they were artificially produced, whereas most of the modern artificial diamonds can be detected easily, and their durability is nothing like so great as the old paste diamond. Probably not one out of every ten thousand buildings standing in all parts of the world and built by modern masons will be standing 500 years hence. We do not know how to put stones and bricks together as the ancients did, and consequently the buildings we raise nowadays will be in ruins when the ancient buildings in Greece and Italy, which were built thousands of years ago, are in as good condition as they are now. The secret is not in the bricks or stone, but in the cement and mortar, neither of which essentials can we make as the ancients made them.

Chemistry, one might imagine, is the science which has made the greatest strides in the last five or six decades. Yet modern chemists cannot compound such dyes as were commonly used when the great nations of today were still unborn. Now and again it happens that searchers after antiquities come across fragments of fabrics which were dyed thousands of years ago, and they are astonished by the wonderful richness of the colors of the cloths, which, despite their age, are brighter and purer than anything we can produce.

Modern artists buy their colors ready made and spend large sums of money on pigments with which to color their canvasses. The pictures of modern artists will be colorless when many of the works of ancient masters are as bright as they are to-day. Just as the secret of dyeing has been lost, so has the secret of preserving the colors of artists' paintings. Yet the secret was known to every ancient artist, for they all mixed their own colors.

## COUNSELS SON BY WIRELESS.

**Marconi Connection Between Father and Boy at College.**

"10:20 p. m.—Joe, what are you studying now? Don't forget your French. Good night. DAD."

This message, or one somewhat like it, the Philadelphia Bulletin asserts, is likely to be roaming about the atmosphere by wireless any evening. At present it is likely to be transmitted only by Dr. Walter Webb of Sharon Hill to his son, Joseph S. Webb, a freshman at Swarthmore College.

The finer details of this minute-by-minute parental guidance were completed recently when a receiving station was installed in young Webb's room in Wharton Hall, the boy's dormitory at Swarthmore College. He and his father have had a station at their home for some time and they have installed one at college so that the son will not grow rusty in handling the key.

The beauty of the scheme is seen after a little thought. Suppose the young man writes home that, owing to the press of studies, he will not be able to visit the old folks over Sunday. Then on Monday his father clicks out a message inquiring whether Joe had received one which was sent the previous day. What excuse could be offered?

Of course, this is not likely in this particular case, because Webb is a diligent student and does what he says he intends to do. But when the practice of having wireless stations at all homes and all schools is common what will the average boy do? At present Joseph Webb, at school, has only a receiving station. Dr. Webb can counsel and admonish him to his heart's content and there will be no "back talk."

And so it may go on. Inventive fathers may devise a thousand and one ways of keeping the son at college up to scratch. When such home and school connection becomes general it is hard to say how unbearable a college boy's life will become.

Take a good watch to a pawnbroker and see how quickly the time passes.

Ministers and divorce judges are kept busy revising the marriage lists.



"Wind," wrote a little boy in his composition at school, "is air when it gets in a hurry."

"I never worry or hurry." "What department of the government service are you in?"—Buffalo Express.

Miss Prim—I want a husband who will be easily pleased. Miss Grouch—That's the kind you'll get.—Life.

Mrs. Benham—You have torn my train! Benham—That's all right; your train is long enough to be in two sections.—Judge.

Howard—Bridget, did my wife come in a few moments ago? Bridget—No, sir. That's the parrot you hear a-hollerin'!—Harper's Bazar.

"Doctor, how do you account for the existence of rheumatism?" "The mind, my dear, evolved the disease to fit the world."—Chicago Tribune.

"Which is the harder to write, verse or jokes?" "Verse comes easier," replied the press humorist. "You have to have an idea for a joke."

Shopman (to boy who has asked for a pennorth of pills)—Do you want them in a box? Boy—Yuss, o' course. Think I'm goin' to roll 'em home?—Punch.

"Were you ever in love?" asked the sweet young thing. "No," replied the bachelor, "but you can't mention any other fashionable disease that I have not had."

Teacher—Jimmy, you look very pale this morning. Are you ill? Jimmy—No, ma'am. Ma washed my face this morning herself. —Woman's Home Companion.

Farmer (at the grindstone)—Well, why don't yer turn? City Nephew—Nix! Ye don't fool me ag'in. Whenever I turn, ye go and bear down with the ax!—Life.

"How shall I break the news to my parents that I have failed in my exams?" "Merely telegraph them: 'Examination over. Nothing new!'"—Fliegende Blaetter.

"There's a masked man at the back door." "Horrors! Is he after my diamonds?" "No, madam. He only wants to borrow a can of gasoline."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

"Why don't you get an automobile?" "I don't know whether I could manage one or not." "A poor argument. You took the same chance, didn't you, when you acquired a wife?"

The Post—Poetry should be written on one side of the paper, shouldn't it? The Editor—That depends on the poetry; lots of it shouldn't be written on either side.—Philadelphia Record.

"A man ought to be a good mechanic in order to get satisfactory results from an automobile." "Yes," answered Mr. Chuggins, "but it's still better to be a good financier."—Washington Star.

Poet's Wife—My husband read this poem at a public celebration before thousands of people. Alas! it was the last poem he ever wrote. Publisher—Did they lynch him or shoot him?—Leslie's Weekly.

"Ever been locked up?" demanded counsel. "I have been," admitted the witness. "Aha! And what had you been doing to get yourself locked up?" "I had been doing jury duty."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Miss Elder—The idea of his pretending that my hair was gray! Miss Peppery—Ridiculous! Miss Elder—Wasn't it, though? Miss Peppery—Yes, just as if you'd buy gray hair!—Catholic Standard and Times.

The Doctor—Mrs. Murphy, you must be at your husband's side continuously, as you will need to hand him something every little while. Mrs. Murphy—Niver, doctor! Fur be it from me to hit a man when he's down!—Puck.

"I thought I ordered quail!" "Dat's quail, suh." "Quail nothing! That's chicken!" "It was chicken, suh, but it ticked me a-comin'." "What has that to do with it?" "De sight of a cullud pussol always makes a chicken quail, suh!"

Father—Bobby, I'm surprised to see you crying because a bee stung you. Brace up and act like a man. Bobby—Y-yes; an' then y-you'd gimme a lickin'. Y-you told me w-what you'd do to me if you e-ever heard me u-usin' that kind of l-language.

"How can I tell," asked the customer, "whether I am getting tender meat or not?" "There's only one sure way, ma'am," said the butcher, "an' that's by eatin' of it." "But I have to buy it before I can do that." "Yes'm; that's the beauty of the prescription."

Guardian—You say you are going to marry a man in order to reform him. That is very noble of you. May I ask who it is? Ward—It's Mr. Colbyrd. Guardian—Indeed? I wasn't aware that he had any bad habits. Ward—Yes. His friends say that he is becoming quite miserly.—London Sketch.

"Little boy," asks the well-meaning reformer, "is that your mamma over yonder with the beautiful set of furs?" "Yes, sir," answers the bright lad. "Well, do you know what poor animal it is that had to suffer in order that your mamma might have the furs with which she adorns herself so proudly?" "Yes, sir—my papa."—B. C. Saturday Sunset.

"When I was once in danger from a lion," said an old African explorer, "I tried sitting down and staring at him, as I had no weapons." "How did it work?" asked his companion. "Perfectly. The lion didn't even offer to touch me." "Strange! How do you account for it?" "Well, sometimes I've thought it was because I sat down on a branch of a very tall tree."