

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

The greatest book of the century, says an exchange, is the check book.

Now that even telephoning without wires is spoken of, there's certainly something in the air.

It must be quite unhealthful to live over 100 years, judging from the way persons above the age are dying off.

The general impression seems to be that the world's nineteenth-century run was a very fair accomplishment.

A vaudeville trust has been organized, but there is little reason to hope that it will throw out any of the old jokes.

Does Ignatius Donnelly know absolutely now whether there really was a Baconian cipher in Mr. Shakspeare's plays or not?

Instead of giving the expression a bicycle flavor by remarking a man has wheels, the up-to-date terms is he's off on his automobile.

The man who invented the photographic film died the other day in New Jersey. To the uninitiated this may seem like a thin excuse for fame.

People are so impressed with the wondrous possibilities of the new century they are asking where will they end. About the only answer at hand is they'll end in precisely a hundred years from date.

It conveys a rather striking idea of the growth of the country in population to consider that the two States of Iowa and Minnesota contain together more inhabitants than did the country over which Washington became President in 1789.

With a man dead from being hanged in a joke and a woman killed by sitting down at a chair that was pulled away, we do not need a didn't-know-it-was-loaded case to remind us that some folk are getting just too funny for anything but the penitentiary.

The first American deep-sea cable was laid last summer across one of the broad Alaskan bays, and the work of continuing the connecting land line up the Yukon valley is now going forward. Iron masts are used in place of timber. A hole is chopped in the eternal ice, and the pole soon firmly set by pouring a little water around it into the hole. This rapidly congeals, and unless disturbed in some other way will remain frozen forever. Evidently, "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," was not spoken of Alaska!

Heredity does not determine courage, or its opposite, but the constitutional tendency may be clearly marked through generations. A recent rescue of shipwrecked persons off Grand Manan is the subject of a report from our consul at St. John, New Brunswick. During a period of more than seventy-five years, grandfather, father and sons of a certain family have repeatedly saved life or plotted vessels out of danger. It is said that the Canadian government is to give the rescuers suitable testimonials. The whole world is a debtor to its heroes of peace. To strengthen the courageous purpose of others by brave doing or enduring is to fulfill one purpose of living.

It cannot possibly "make a man" of a boy to pour a peppery sauce down his throat; to pour hot grease on his feet; to pull him at night out of bed into the diet and mire of the street; to compel him to persist in a gesture or movement till he faints from agony; to make him stand on his head in a bathtub; or ride logs and sing senseless verses; to goad him into offensive replies and then challenge him to fight a higher-class man of more experience, with the result of being knocked out by a blow in the stomach and disfigured with cuts about the face; to bedevil him night and day so that his nerves shall be unstrung and study and success in examinations will become impossible, causing him to be expelled finally.

An illustration of the present eagerness of practically all nations for oceanic islands is furnished by France in its attempt at introducing sheep-raising on Kerguelen Island, about half way between Africa and Australia. These new sheep-raisers will be nearer the south pole than any other Pacific islanders and the most southerly people on an oceanic island. The island of Kerguelen for many years was claimed by both British and French geographers, but as it was not supposed to be of any special value no steps were taken by either government for the formal occupation of the lonely isle. In 1883 France formally annexed the island, owing to accounts from the French Island of Reunion. Inhabitants of the latter found that Kerguelen had an abundance of fish, that it was a resort for sea lions, valuable on account of their oil; that there were a number of good harbors, that lignite for fuel had been found. Moreover, as the isle lies near the sailing route between Australia, the East Indies and Chinese waters, it would be a good place for a supply station. Although the annual temperature is only 10 or 12 degrees above the freezing point there is a strip of zone of grass on the island, and now the attempt will be made to begin the sheep-raising industry. If this can be combined with the other advantages

there will at least be a chance for hardy colonists to make a living on this otherwise desolate isle.

A novel case has been decided by a New York court. A passenger brought suit against the New York Central Railroad for being deprived of his seat in the car. The question involved was whether a man, when he puts his valise or any hand baggage into a seat, thereby reserving it for his own occupancy, is legally and morally entitled to it. The court decided that when a passenger buys a ticket he presumes that he is to get a seat, and unless there is some unusual condition he is legally entitled to it. If he enters an ordinary coach where no seats are reserved and there is no trainman to usher him to a seat, it is the custom of railway companies to allow the passenger to choose his own seat. This practically amounts to a regulation of the company. Therefore, the court ruled, if a person occupied a seat and then for any reason left it without in some way marking it as reserved by himself and returned to find it occupied by another passenger, he has no right to ask that passenger to give up the seat. If, however, he leaves his cane, umbrella or hand bag in his seat when he goes to the platform to buy a paper, or for any purpose, and finds his baggage moved and the seat occupied by another, he has a legal right as well as moral right to that seat. The court further held that a passenger was entitled to but one seat, and could not reserve one seat in an ordinary coach while occupying another seat in a smoking car. This decides a point which has been raised thousands of times on railway trains.

In its broadest statement the problem of the world's economy is to develop and give scope of individual originality, the benefits of whose exercise are registered in individual character as well as in objective results. The English economist, Marshall, however, declares that one-half of the power of human initiative is suppressed by the present social order, and it is not difficult to accept the statement. The happy instances where individuals manipulate circumstances so as to bring out striking results are rendered the more conspicuous by the number of other individuals who entirely fail not only of such achievement but of anything comparable thereto. And yet it is known that these others grade only somewhat below the first in capacity. Of all the stupendous waste exhibited in the physical and moral world this is perhaps the most tragic in character and consequences. Yet it is enacted unobtrusively and with little dramatic effect. It is typified by the circumscribed career of the working class boy who, at 14 years, passes from the influence of the "graded" system of education to "tend a machine" for ten hours a day. The lot of the few who enjoy more elastic and extended educational opportunities and a more adequate field of action thereafter is more in the public eye. Theirs, however, is not the lot of "the great majority." Among the latter there is no inconsiderable proportion whose power of individual initiative is but meagerly developed and whose potential contribution to the world's enterprise is never realized. There can be no doubt that the dominant aim of the century which has just closed has been commercial rather than humanistic. It has been the century of wealth-making. It has launched an entire series of world's fairs. It has established free public schools and abolished slavery, both of which acts mean accelerated material development. It has built great cities with their lack of art. It has gone haltingly forward with its newly demanded factory laws. It has neglected persons as conscious objects. It has trusted for salvation to the instinct of gain. It has—perhaps with some twinges of conscience—assured all men that the current waste of flesh and brain was inevitable and that there could be no better way. The problem of this century is to work out that higher economy in which there shall not only be a still better directed effort to effect material saving but in which the emphasis shall be shifted from the material product to the human agent—in which social advance rather than the instinct of profit-making or even of vast organization shall more effectually dictate action. This does not mean the retarding of material progress. Quite the contrary. The better the man the better his product. And a century whose conscious effort shall be to make all existing progress converge upon the development of its people and upon insuring scope to their capacities will realize a peculiar quality and profusion of productive expression.

British War Office Methods.
It will not be Sir Evelyn Wood's fault if there is any red tape at the war office while he is in charge. When Sir Evelyn was a captain in the Seventeenth Lancers he devised an improved cavalry saddle and sent it to the war office. The latter and parcel were politely acknowledged at the time, and the matter rested for nearly twenty years. Then, when Sir Evelyn was quartermaster general of the forces he came by chance across a parcel addressed in his own handwriting to the war office. It was unopened, and on cutting the string he found his saddle!—St. James' Gazette.

The Extremity of Curiosity.
The 14-year-old son of a respectable Jew in Warsaw hanged himself the other day. He left a note, saying, "I have hanged myself out of mere curiosity. I could not help myself. I had to find out what they were doing in the other world."—Jewish World.

A politician without patronage is like a cat without claws.

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