

## Topics of the Times

In Russia you are entirely free to vote just as the government desires.

Any man can tell a lie, but it takes a born diplomat to induce people to believe it.

The London Lancet says the Christmas pudding is not indigestible. Not unless you eat it.

Besides, the army can take care of Poulit Bigelow if he goes snooping around the isthmus again.

Evidently the people of England regard the old plan for a tunnel under the English Channel as a terrible bore.

Count Zeppelin has spent all his fortune trying to sail through the clouds. All his palaces are now castles in the air.

A man named Gong has recently been married. When his wife strikes him for money, the whole town is likely to hear it.

Spain's lemon crop has been ruined; but we have never had to worry much about the lemons Spain tried to hand us, anyhow.

As to the Jamaican earthquake, it is feared that the worst is yet to come. Alfred Austin is said to have written a poem about it.

A French scientist has discovered that insects have no minds. What's the matter with the insects? Do they smoke cigarettes?

Prominent among those who will not be present at the next distribution of Carnegie medals for bravery will be found the captain of the Larchmont.

Mr. Harriman says "a successful man has no chance these days." Truly, there does not seem to be much of the element of chance in the little game Mr. Harriman plays.

Although there is a possibility of our getting into communication with Mars, it is not likely that we will ever be able to borrow an occasional hod of coal from there during a fuel famine.

Health departments throughout the country are warning everybody to look out for the influenza germ, although not one in a thousand of us would recognize the little pest if we were to see it.

The Mississippi Supreme Court has ruled that a boy has an inalienable right to climb a tree. But there is also the father's inalienable right to thrash him for tearing his clothes while doing it.

Goldwin Smith wants to know why, if the theory of evolution is correct, no more monkeys are developing into men. Perhaps it is because so many of the sons of men are evolving the other way.

We have read of a man who the other day fell down stairs and broke his neck while trying to kiss a woman. It would simply be a waste of space to point out the moral to this sad accident.

The tailors in convention assembled have decided that the styles for the coming season must be different in every respect from those that have prevailed during the past year. The tailors know how to promote their business.

Says Mrs. Carrie Catt: "A wife must train her husband and keep him trained just as one trains a young mule." Far be it from our intentions to say anything that would seem like a contradiction of Mrs. Catt, but we would like to ask what the average wife knows about training a mule?

In real or supposed imitation of college youths, still more youthful students in high schools and preparatory schools have adopted strange head-gears. Instead of the modest boyish cap and the neat soft or stiff felt hat for "dress up," some fantastic boys have topped themselves with slouch-hats, variously distorted in the shape of the brims and even decorated with markings and devices. The principal of one high school has asked his boys to cast off the crazy head-coverings. The matter of decency and simplicity of dress is really important. The boy who deliberately wears something that draws attention to himself may be pardoned by any one with humor enough to understand boyish folly. Nevertheless, the habit of unobtrusive dress is a good one to cultivate early.

Huddersfield, England, has lately been the scene of a curious and interesting experiment made by the Mayor. In Longwood, a poor district of the town, the rate of mortality among young children had been 122 in the thousand. The new Mayor, Mr. Broadbent, a brother of Sir William Broadbent, the king's physician, decided when he took office to do what he could to reduce this high death rate. The plan he adopted was the offer of a guinea to parents in certain specified districts for every child born during his term of office and living at the end of a year. In spite of the fact that serious epidemics of whooping-cough and measles prevailed during the year of the tests, and that the summer of 1908 was one of the

deadliest on record, 107 mothers received the bonus. The mortality was 44 in the thousand, as compared with the previous 122. There is something very attractive in a form of infantile insurance which pays, not upon proof of death, but upon evidence of continued existence.

Shall the patient be told what ails him and what drugs have been prescribed for him or shall the physician maintain a dark and mysterious silence except as to the amount of his fee? This is the question which was proposed by no less a personage than the President of the American Medical Association the other day. He did not answer his own interrogatory, but his observations indicated that he favored a policy of greater candor upon the part of the physician. There is obviously something to be said on both sides of the question. It is true that the patient wants to know what is wrong with him and at first sight it may look as if the physician ought to satisfy the desire for information. But there are good and substantial reasons why the doctor does not do so. For one thing, the chances are that he does not himself know what ails the sufferer. For another thing, it might do the patient more harm than good to be told of his disease. The first-named reason involves no reflection upon the skill and learning of the doctor. The physician never lived who could unfailingly diagnose offhand and from one observation. Fever, for instance, marks the onset of a dozen different diseases and until distinctive symptoms develop the medical man cannot tell which one of the dozen diseases is in progress. Under such circumstances his obvious course is to maintain a dignified reticence until he actually knows what is wrong. To guess and guess wrong would be disastrous. When we come to consider the matter of informing the patient concerning the drugs that have been prescribed for him the considerations favor a negative conclusion. There is a psychic as well as a material force in a medicine whose constituents are unknown to the patient. All doctors know it. The bread pill and other "placebos" prove it. Tell a man that he is taking calomel, for instance, and he is likely to protest that calomel always disagrees with him and never did him any good. Give him calomel accompanied by the assurance that here is a most potent drug whose name he need not know and his sense of the marvelous is excited. He is likely to put faith in the drug for the very reason that he does not know what it is. That is half the battle. Our modern physicians may not acknowledge it, but they practice faith cure more and more every day. The power of suggestion helps the calomel when the patient does not know what he is taking. All things considered, therefore, the weight of evidence is in favor of the policy of mysterious silence on the part of the doctor. It not only aids the patient but it helps the doctor, for the less he says the less he will have to explain if things go wrong.

### Very Lucid.

A lady left her home for her annual visit to her mother. Before her departure she told her husband that if he wanted anything that he could not easily find he was to write to her for directions. "Don't turn the house upside down, as you generally do," she said. "I will answer at once and tell you just where it is." Soon after his wife's departure a neighbor came in to borrow a pattern of a dress. The husband wrote, as he had been requested to do. This was the answer by return—"You will find it hanging on the wall by the garret stairs, or in the box on top of the sewing machine in Ellen's room—the green box, or the red one, I forgot which. Perhaps, though, it is on the top shelf in the cupboard in our room—left-hand side, if I remember correctly, but look on the other side, too. If not there it is in the bottom drawer of the bureau in the hall. That is where I keep my patterns, and don't untie all the bundles. It is among them somewhere. Perhaps it is in the second drawer. It is somewhere upstairs, any way, so don't rummage downstairs. P. S.—Now I come to think of it, I may have lent it to my sister Ann!"

### When Chloroform Was New.

Here is a curious little story about Sir James Simpson, the man who introduced the use of chloroform into surgery, and a peril which he escaped, as recorded by Lyon Playfair. Simpson when busy with his researches into the subject of anaesthetics called one day on Playfair and asked if he had anything new likely to produce anaesthesia. Playfair had just prepared a liquid which seemed worthy of trial. Simpson, who knew no fear, prepared instantly to test it on himself. This Playfair refused to allow until it had first been tried on rabbits. Two were procured and placed under the effects of the anaesthetic. Next day Simpson proposed to try it on himself. "We might as well see how the rabbits have fared," said Playfair. They found both the animals dead.

### It Looked Small to Him.

There was a small Scotch boy who had the quality of astuteness highly developed. The boy's grandmother, says the Liverpool Post, was packing his luncheon for him to take to school. Suddenly, looking up into the old lady's face, he said: "Grandmother, do your specs magnify?" "A little, my child," she answered. "Aweel, then," said the boy, "I would just like it if ye would take them off when ye're packing my luncheon."

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