

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

The truth that hits is the truth we hate.

The high livers do not reach the heights of life.

Radium, you may have observed, is now guaranteed to do all those things that liquid air was going to do a few years ago.

Mme. Nordica doesn't get any alimony, but her case isn't so bad. She won't have to support the gentleman any more.

It appears that when a society woman writes a magazine article she furnishes a paragraph or two and the editor does the rest.

Possibly the reason so many men make fortunes on a thousand or two a year is because they do not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing.

The Hon. Bourke Cochran, who says the United States is the "hottum of the world," has no objections to being one of the hottums' hired hands at \$5,000 a year.

The outcome of this war is going to be disagreeable either way. Everybody hopes Russia will be whipped, but if Japan wins how will it be possible hereafter to hold the Japsies?

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Of the immigrants landing in the United States during the fiscal year, \$11,502 had less than \$30, and 185,907 could neither read nor write. It is no sin to be poor, but it seems wicked that there are so many adults in the world who have never been to school. Something wrong somewhere.

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It is a remarkable fact, when properly viewed, that a parent cannot bequeath his own experience to his child. A parent can give his child the example of right living, advice and money, but he cannot give his personal experience. Suppose I could bequeath my experience to my boy? And my boy to his boy? And so on. In a few generations we should have a perfected humanity. Why this plan of redeeming the race did not recommend itself to divine wisdom we cannot say. As a matter of fact, every person must become a pupil in the school of experience. The old adage says, "Experience is a dear teacher, but fools will learn in no other." This is not true. Experience is a dear school in which all men, wise and foolish, must learn. But—One must distinguish between experience and wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge in action. Wisdom is applied experience. Many persons learn a lesson by experience and then fail to profit by it. Many persons suffer and then fail to get strength out of the suffering. This is true: The highest good will never come to you until you are prepared to receive it. The best gifts of life will never be yours until the way has been cleared for them by the applied lessons of experience.

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lion cans. Iowa comes next, and New York third. It looks from these figures as if the vegetable-raisers amend the alleged practice of the fruit-growers in the West—can all they can and eat all they can. But it is not vegetables and fruit alone that are preserved in tin. No one need eat fresh food unless he prefers it, for the market contains canned roast beef, canned tongue, canned chicken, canned loaf, canned soups, canned pork and beans, canned peas, canned beets, canned peas and canned almost everything except canned digestion, and that is put up in glass bottles at the druggists, ready to be taken along with the things in tin.

A club lady in Chicago, in a meeting of matrons to discuss the great issues of life, when asked how to manage a husband so as to secure domestic tranquility, promptly answered: "Feed the brute plenty of good, well-cooked food," and the club ladies all made a note of it, and it is believed the experiment is now on extensive trial in the windy city. This recipe for domestic happiness suggests a managerial view of married life, and may furnish a reason for the tendency to board rather than keep home, that is so strong upon many married people. In this view it is complimentary to the sense of justice of the brute. For what dyspepsia he gets at a boarding-house table he does not blame his wife, but the landlady. She cares nothing for the growling of the animals at feeding time, provided they don't die in the house and will be buried from the undertaker's melancholy parlors. This new plan for peace foreholds also the permanent disarming of the domestic forces, since young ladies about to assume the task of marrying one of the brutes will be impelled to acquire a knowledge of the mysteries of cooking in order to live happily ever after. When this art is generally attained the boarding-house landladies will be overtaken by lack of trade and will be punished for their many transgressions. So a beautiful vista opens in front of the American home and the dove is likely to build her nest in the stomach of that brute, the American husband.

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EDITORIALS

Opinions of Great Papers on Important Subjects.

The Hired Man.

It is important that the hired man on the farm should be sociable and "chipper." That lesson protrudes from nearly every page of the interesting government bulletin on "Wages of Farm Labor in the United States." The relations of the hired man and his employer are personal and sentimental, and democratic to a degree found in few other occupations. If the farm hand has a lively tongue and a cheerful manner, the employer may do any number of things for him that will not figure in the contract. He will let him cut firewood from the wood lot, raise as many hens and pigs as he chooses on the farmer's land, graze a cow or two, have a horse and buggy whenever he wants to drive into the village, and if he is married, occupy a house and garden patch, rent free. It pays to be agreeable on the farm.

And it pays every farmer to have as diversified crops as possible, particularly if he is hiring help. The one-crop farmer, be his product corn or cotton, crowds into about four months all the work of the year. If he uses his acres at other seasons for dairying or lumbering, he could profitably employ a good part of his own surplus time and energy and those of his sons if he has any, or of his hired man if he has engaged one. As the government bulletin intimates, the season of idleness on the farm, when there is none or little employment of labor, as contrasted to steady employment in a factory, constitutes "the great difficulty in procuring help for the farm." The hired man's wages are highest in the States where the farms are well wooded, lowest in the treeless prairie States. The farmers of the country earn a pretty penny every year—over \$100,000,000—from the product of their wood lots; the annual value of sawlogs cut for the lumber business expressly is only \$50,000,000 more than the farmer receives as a side issue from his winter's work with the ax and saw.—New York Mail and Express.

Why Forests are Useful.

Let us take two hillsides of identical slope and exposure, one being forested, the other cleared. The rain falls on the canopy of trees in the one instance and drips softly from leaves and branches and trickles down the trunk. The soil beneath is soft and loose (even in winter it does not freeze hard), a composition of disintegrated rock, decaying leaves and twigs and even logs, and all tied together by a dense mass of roots and rootlets. The rain comes upon this forest soil so softly through the trees that the ground is not compacted and hardened or gullied as it would be if the rain fell directly on the soil.

The loose and spongy earth takes up the water as fast as it falls, and that which is not soaked by the roots for the nourishment of the trees is carried away into underground basins, from which it slowly percolates and eventually comes out upon the surface again as springs. So slowly does this filtering go on, the spongy soil holding the water back, that the springs are given a constant and almost steady supply. Even drought will actually dry up but few such. Snows also melt more slowly in the forest, thereby preventing disastrous spring freshets.

In the other case, that of the treeless slope, the rain falls directly on the bare ground and pounds it hard and impervious. The water for the most part runs off superficially as from a roof. Not enough water sinks into the ground to help feed constant springs. The surface run-off of a hard run on a bare hillside is moreover conducive to gullying and washing of the soil. It is a destructive nature, and the waters being poured immediately into the stream beds, cause freshets. The fresher waters quickly rush by, wreaking havoc with fields, bridges, mills and the next week the streams are nearly run dry.—Boston Transcript.

Economic Independence.

It is probable that \$100 per capita is a moderate estimate of the value of the food annually consumed by the people of the United States. In other words, the grocery and provision bill of this country approximates \$2,000,000,000 a year. The impossibility of ascertaining with accuracy the money value of these sources of table supply in which no commercial transaction is involved—the farmer's kitchen garden; the fish and the game of those who eat what they catch and shoot; and the beef, mutton

and pork killed and eaten by those who raise the animals—leaves any statement of the cost of feeding the nation a matter rather of estimate than of known amount.

Some idea of our absolute economic independence, so far as food products are concerned, is obtained by a realization of the fact that about 97.5 per cent of the \$8,000,000,000 grocery and provision bill is supplied from domestic sources. If the remaining 2.5 per cent obtained by importation, be analyzed, it is seen that a half dozen items, such as coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, spices and tropical fruits, represent more than three-quarters of the foreign supply. The importation of articles which might be or even could be raised in this country is probably less than one-half of one per cent of the total value of our annual food consumption.

Not only does our actual domestic supply of all dietary substances exceed in its percentage that of any other nation or people rightly claiming to be civilized, but there is the further fact that in point of variety our menu is almost unlimited. The question of cookery is a side issue depending on individual taste. But the fact remains that we have the food in limitless quantity and infinite variety, the product of American farms, gardens, fields, orchards, forests, rivers, lakes and oceans.

In addition to this generous supply of our domestic needs, we sold to other countries last year, about \$900,000,000 worth of surplus crop. It may be remarked that we also have a few acres of land not yet under cultivation.—New York Sun.

Your Share of the Public Debt.

OUR father can remember when a 7 per cent government bond served as a sort of interest standard. Of course, it was a gilt-edged security, but 7 per cent for money was considered about the proper figure. That was not very long ago. It was in a day when the public debt of the nation, measured by the resources of the people, was a heavy burden. Now we have 2 per cent bonds. In fact, more than half of our bonds are 2 per cent securities. In the face of a thousand alluring investments, including farm mortgages and municipal bonds, the government can have all the money it wants at 2 per cent. Your share of the interest on the public debt is 84 cents annually. Your share of the interest-bearing debt is \$1.

We piled up millions of liabilities during the Spanish war, and yet the total of the public debt is less than the capital of the Steel Corporation; less than the total amount of life insurance credited to at least two concerns. The interest-bearing debt on Dec. 31, 1908, was \$901,747,320. Eleven dollars per head. In Great Britain the debt is \$75 per capita, and in Holland it is \$90. France has a national debt so great that each inhabitant owes \$150. The ray of sunlight there is the fact that France has borrowed from the people, and there is no danger of foreign creditors foreclosing a mortgage on that country. Argentina owes \$128 per capita, and Australasia \$285.

We talk much of our natural resources, our loyal people and our low taxes. Don't forget that one of our greatest items of strength in foreign lands is our financial standard. The nation with unlimited credit, with a big treasury chest, is in a position to command and direct and influence. Financially, the United States has no competitors.—St. Louis Chronicle.

Too Many Railroad Accidents.

WITHIN a month 125 people have been killed by railroad accidents in the Eastern and Middle States, and more were injured. It may be argued that this is hardly more than a normal amount of destruction in so large a populace as ours, but there is no normal rate of violent death. If accidents continue in the same proportion, it will mean that whole regiments of our citizens will be exterminated by trains in the course of this year, and that be entirely too many. Our authorities are always lenient toward the people who are primarily responsible for these slaughters, because presidents, superintendents and directors are not personally cognizant of defects which caused the accidents; but if we were to acquire a habit of holding the officers of railroads to an account, they in turn would exact more faithful and adequate service of their employees, and there would be a lessening in the number of accidents as a result.—Brooklyn Eagle.

THE LAZIEST PEOPLE.

Koreans Make Their Women Beasts of Burden—Seoul a Filthy City.

Broadly speaking, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Koreans are the laziest people on earth. All day long they lay about the streets smoking their gigantic pipes (a native pipe is a six-foot length of bamboo with a metal bowl, and is carried tucked into the neckband, and down the trouser leg). All work, save very nearly every kind, is done by the women, who occupy, perhaps, the most degraded position held by the sex of any nation. The unfortunate female population is collectively a beast of burden, and denied even the most elementary recognition as human beings. A Korean girl has no name; she is merely known as "daughter of—"

During the first moon of each year the Cho-see throw off their inordinate laziness and allow their naturally gorgeous proclivities full play. This is the period permitted by law when anyone and everyone may fight in the public streets, or anywhere they choose, with impunity. And full advantage of the license is taken. Now are family disputes, which have been seething for a whole twelvemonth, settled in the most primitive fashion, and often half the town is drawn into the brawl. The creditor, catching his debtor abroad, may thump and pound him to his heart's content, and no one may interfere. For fourteen days a veritable pandemonium reigns, and as a method of "clearing the air" it is certainly not without interest for the spectator.

Seoul, the capital, on the Hang-Kang river, is an untidy, dilapidated city, surrounded by twenty-foot walls. The curfew system, common to feudal England, still prevails as in most Korean towns. A great bell is rung at sunset, and the gates are immediately closed, not to be reopened until the following sunrise. No lights may then be carried in the streets, and no one may go out of the city, with one rather startling exception. All funerals, by immemorial custom, take place only at night, and for this purpose there is a special exit called "The Gate of the Dead." Between the hours of sunset and dawn, no male is allowed to be abroad in the streets; these hours are sacred to the women, and constitute their only privilege. They usually employ the time in paying visits. Up to a few years ago, any masculine philanderer found out after dark was beheaded, but since the Ku-

ropeans have introduced their own customs, the entire system is in danger of revolution.

Seoul is one of the filthiest and worst-kept towns to be found in all the east. The idea of drainage has not yet entered the official mind, and that pestilence has not made there its abiding home is proof of a beneficent Providence. During the writer's sojourn some years ago, it was an unusual occurrence for the agile leopard (Korea's most common "wild-fowl"), to scale one of the walls, and entering the nearest house, carry off a child in the darkness. To-day, however, they have changed all that; but Seoul's greatest need, from a western point of view, is still a dwelling hotel. The native dwelling-house is an impossibility to all but a samurai. The flooring, in most cases, is composed of neatly-jointed flat stones, over which mats are laid. Underneath is a hollow space, in which firewood is laid in bundles and lighted. The paper doors are then slid into their grooves, excluding all air, and soon you find yourself in a Turkish bath. The average new-comer only tries it once.

STORY OF A FUGITIVE HAT.

It belonged to a Portly Man Who Went Home Paralyzed.

A stiff breeze from the west was blowing across an open square when a man of portly form and dignified demeanor turned the corner of an adjoining street. He was a notable man in his own movement. He was erect and his rounded figure had a military poise, an air of dignity which was imposing.

Suddenly a wild gust seized his shirting hat and whirled it off. It shot up into the air and described circles in the manner of M. Santos-Dumont's albatross. Then it flew across the street and fell into a puddle of muddy water. The dignified citizen gazed at the flight of his hat in a bewildered fashion. When it fell to the ground he centered gently after it. As he neared it he bent eagerly forward. His hand almost touched the precious hat when swoop came another gust and snatched the unfortunate hat, which went rolling off, churning the muddy waters of the gutter like the screw of a steamer.

The owner of the hat looked wrathfully after it and then started in pursuit on a mad gallop. Swiftly along the square rolled the hat. Suddenly, in the midst of his swift course, the pursuer stepped on a piece of orange peel, grasped wildly at the air and fell with a despairing splash.

Shorn of all his dignity, the unhappy man slowly rose, looked around to see if he was observed, then carefully examined his injured raiment. From collar to waist his frock coat had split. Twenty yards ahead, peacefully reposing upon the curbstone, lay the innocent cause of all his misfortunes.

With an air of grim determination he strode toward it. The hat remained joyfully reposing on the edge of a puddle. The portly person gazed down at the waterlogged, mud-covered hat and then at his own ruined raiment.

Just then, as if inspired by a demon of mischief, the hat began to sway with a passing gust. This was too much. Gathering himself together, the fat man made a slight leap and landed both feet squarely on the hat. He peered anxiously around to see if he was observed, and then, turning up his coat collar, strode away, leaving the fragments of what had once been a silk hat reposing in the gutter.

His Reason for Remaining.

A solicitor relates a ludicrous incident in which he himself played a prominent part. He was interested in a man who had been accused by his employer of stealing a pair of trousers, and thinking the fellow had been wronged by the arrest and charge, stood up for him in court and made a clever defense. The magistrate discharged the prisoner, who, however, remained in the dock for some moments, keeping his gaze fixed on the prosecutor. After a time the lawyer said kindly,—

"My dear man, you have lost enough time from your work. Now that you are cleared of the charge why do you not hurry home?"

"Well," was the reply, "to tell you the truth, I've got the blessed thing-majig on, and I'm afraid to leave the box in case the boss recognizes 'em!"

Chinese Are Honest.

Honesty is a prevailing virtue among most Chinamen. Some of them in their native towns and cities often leave their places of business unguarded while they go off for half an hour or more.

Thawing out an Oil Pipe Line.

An eight-inch oil pipe line from the Bakerveld region to San Francisco had to be heated at intervals so that the oil will flow.

Men not only make their wives write all the kin letters, but of late they make them answer the telephone.



LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS.

Some of the Lower Creatures Able to Imitate Sounds.

The cries of animals are a species of natural language, according to a writer in Forest and Stream. The older grammarians, I remember, taught us that crying, weeping, laughing, etc., were examples of natural language; they were expressive of feeling natural to men and were understood by all intuitively. The origin of spoken or artificial language, as it is called, is a large subject and I do not propose to enter upon it; but I presume that all forms of natural language, including the cries of beasts and birds, are, as the term implies, natural to them, that is, born with them; and the specific cry of any species must be determined by some peculiarities of the vocal organs in that species. For example, a crow caws and a rooster crows, because by the peculiar structure of their vocal arrangements, they can utter those sounds more readily than any other. Yet, by training and effort, some of the lower creatures become able to imitate and reproduce other sounds than those most natural to them, just as the first natural outcries of the infant give way through culture to the myriad utterances of artificial language.

The bawling of a cow and the roar of a lion are quite different sounds and, as things stand now, the sound uttered by one of these animals would be quite impossible to the other; yet, as I read Darwin, either of these outcries might in time come to be the natural cry of the other. If the two species of animals could be brought to live peacefully together and to the lion it should become apparent that the voice of the cow would be of great value to him, say in the matter of securing his food, there is no reason to doubt that he might in the course of time, from effort transmitted from generation to generation, come at length to possess the dulcet notes of the cow.

If the giraffe, which was originally only a large antelope, has developed his high forequarters, his elongated neck and his long, flexible upper lip, from his efforts to browse on the higher branches of the trees, and if the founder, which when young has its eyes on the opposite sides of its head, as any well-regulated fish would be expected to have, is able through long continued effort to transfer the eye that rests disagreeably on the sands around to the other side of its head, where it may be of some service, there is no telling what varieties or modifications of voice or shape may be wrought in nature in the course of the ages.

But let us have no meandering. A kitten cries out, because in common with nearly all animals, it is furnished with a certain vocal apparatus, and its cry takes the peculiarity of a mew, because that sound best responds to its special vocal apparatus. Hence, and especially in view of the little incident which I have related, I am led to believe that the young of any animal utter the same cry as its mother and not from imitation. I think the young rooster crows and a young hen cackles, not in imitation of their elders, but, like the poet who "hispers in numbers," because "the numbers came." Imagine if Robinson Crusoe had landed on his solitary island with a good, fresh-laid hen's egg in his pocket, and he had put it to hatch under his pet parrot, the rooster, if such had come forth, would have crowed out lustily of a summer morning, and never would have learned to say "Poor Polly!" in the world.

CONVERTIBLE TABLE DESK.

Article of Furniture Embracing Advantage of Two Pieces.