

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

Credit is all well enough until the bill collector begins to come around.

The most magnificent thing Jay Gould ever did was to become the father of Helen.

The Japs are said to be using "humans" bullets. This is one of the few humors of "civilized warfare."

Never strike a man until you are satisfied that he deserves it—and don't do it then unless you outclass him.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox's latest poem says: "Whatever you do, keep sweet." This would be a nice motto for a lemon, wouldn't it?

The men say they have no desire to organize a fathers' congress. They get their feelings while the mothers' congress is in session.

It would be like the beef trust to explain that the worry and expense of being investigated will necessitate another increase of prices.

A British scientist claims that the earth is kept hot by radium. Perhaps the great rush for radium was what made last winter so cold.

The Rev. M. J. Savage in a recent sermon undertakes to tell "why more people do not go to church." He finds the principal reason to be that "they don't have to."

We would like to learn the Mormon methods of making a living. A man who can provide for five wives and 100 children under present prices is a financial wonder.

John D. Rockefeller began his business career by learning to milk a cow. A good many people would like to know whether that was when he learned to water things.

Doctors now assert that bedrooms are filled to the doors with microbes and bacteria. That's another excuse for your not going to bed until very late.

When Dr. Rainford says to us laymen, "We ministers are no better morally than you," we laymen, instead of feeling elated, are liable, knowing each others' infirmities, to be decidedly depressed.

Somebody says that the Parisians furnish the gowns and the American women furnish the figures. When it takes three figures for a gown the American father at once becomes an active factor in the little epigram.

Wash a baby clean and dress him up real pretty and he will resist all advances with the most superlative crossness, but let him eat molasses, gingerbread and fruit around the coal hole for half an hour, and he will nestle his dear little curly head close up to your clean shirt bosom and be just the cunningest little rascal in all the world.

The Victory, which bore Nelson's flag at Trafalgar, has been thoroughly repaired, and towed to her former moorings at Portsmouth, where she will be the flag ship of the naval commander-in-chief. The prediction is made that she will float for another half-century at least. It is 146 years since the Victory was launched at Chatham.

To exclude immigrants for illiteracy is unjust. Most of those people are illiterate because they lacked opportunity. Here they soon learn, and their children become as bright as any in our public schools. An illiterate man who is industrious and honest, makes a far better voter and citizen than some native born citizen who has education and a keen desire for graft.

A dog in England has lately been honored by the receipt of an illuminated address in which he is informed that he is the most successful collector for the Victoria Infirmary at Norwich, and is thanked by the board of managers. The dog is a 5-year-old fox-terrier, named Prince. He does not wear a cup or basket or carry one in his mouth, as do most mendicant dogs. When he receives a coin he goes unbidden and deposits it in a box kept for the purpose. During 1903 he collected more than 2,000 coins. One hopes that if illness or accident ever overtake Prince there may be a warm bed for him at the infirmary, with plenty of good sirloin steak and dog biscuit.

Cuba has entered the third year of her independence and self-government and she has every reason to be proud of the record she has made. Apart from a rumor or two of rural riots that were greatly exaggerated and an exceptionally large amount of noise from the defeated party at the last election—and if such things are really discredits, what has our own country to say for itself? The best of it is that the Cubans appear to be in every way contented and happy. Undoubtedly this could not be said had the United States seen fit to retain a closer hold over their government. With or without reason, suspicion and dislike would have taken root. Moreover, the last two years have taught the Cubans a vast deal more about the benefits of quiet and peaceful government than they could ever have learned in any other way. If they have been on extra good behavior for the sake of showing us what they could do, that does not detract at all from the value of the training they have gained. It is too early as yet to show by facts and figures what material benefit Cuba has gained from the reciprocity act which went into effect last December. The fact that the law was pending caused the Cuban sugar ready for exportation last fall to be held back in order to secure the benefit of the lower duties. As a result Cuba sent us during the first three months of this year goods to the value of \$25,000,000, as against

\$12,000,000 in the corresponding months of 1903. At the same time our exports to Cuba increased from \$5,200,000 to \$6,500,000, the more important increases being in flour, cotton cloth, sewing machines, locomotives, lumber, leather and furniture. Beyond question our merchants can secure enlarged markets in Cuba if they but exert themselves to take advantage of the preference in their favor, while it is to be anticipated that Cuba's industrial and agricultural development will furnish proof that it has been greatly stimulated, even before the present year is out.

If any one thinks that the United States has a monopoly of all the energy and enterprise he should reverse his opinions forthwith. The whole world is wide-awake, and every people is alert for opportunities for advancement. There are the Russians, for instance, whom we have been accustomed to regard as somewhat slow and behind the times. They have recently secured the services of Horace G. Burt, formerly president of the Union Pacific Railroad Company, to assist them in making the Siberian railroad as efficient as the transcontinental roads in the United States, where the problems of carrying trains across wide plains and over snow-capped mountains have been solved. Then there are the Spaniards, who are planning for closer trade relations with the Spanish-speaking peoples of South America. And the Germans are seeking outlets for their surplus population in countries which will buy the products of the German factories. The British are considering plans for a commercial federation of their colonies for the development of their resources and the preservation of the trade of the mother country. The French are developing their possessions in North Africa and undertaking the reclamation of the Sahara, as well as pushing their railroads across the Pyrenees into Northern Spain. And all these people are studying the Americans, that they may avoid our mistakes and profit by our successes. Within a few weeks the reports of two independent British commissions to this country have been made public. An official of the railway department in India, after a tour of the United States, reports that "the one idea in the minds of the American railway men is to 'get there.'" He thinks that this is the secret of American railway success. One of the members of a private commission to study the relation of the schools to American commercial success says that "the schools have not made the people what they are, but the people, being what they are, have made the schools." The "American peril," of which we hear much, is that the Americans shall grow complacent and satisfied with themselves, instead of keeping their place in the company of the other wide-awake peoples.

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EDITORIALS

Opinions of Great Papers on Important Subjects.

Triumph of Forestry. ACCORDING to United States Consul Tourgee, of Bordeaux, the growth of the "pin maritime," or marine pine, in the Landes and adjoining departments of France, "undoubtedly marks the most remarkable achievement ever wrought by human agency in the modification of natural conditions of soil and climate for the benefit of mankind."

A century ago the region between the Gironde and the Pyrenees was in most of its extent "not only one of the most barren in the world, but apparently altogether hopeless of reclamation." Sand dunes were advancing from the sea at rates varying up to 300 feet a year, swallowing up fields, meadows, vineyards, houses, churches, villages, and leaving nothing but a gray desert. The old forests had been destroyed, and now nature was taking its revenge. There seemed no hope for the heart of France, when it occurred to Bremon tier, a native of the threatened region, that the devastation might be arrested by planting the "pin maritime."

The idea was submitted to Napoleon, who saw its value and ordered its execution. The result, says Consul Tourgee, has been the greatest of his victories. "To-day the dark squadrons of the pin maritime are posted on thousands of sandy slopes, faithful guardians in the shelter of which the vineyards and wheat fields rest secure." They give not only protection, but profit. Lumber, strewed, turpentine and all the by-products of restorative distillation are now produced in such abundance here as not only to prevent the need of importation, but to make southwest France a considerable and profitable exporter, "even to the United States."

Meanwhile, by permitting the reckless destruction of our own much richer long-leaved pines, which formerly protected our coasts and which asked only to be let alone, we are bringing upon ourselves the same desolation that threatened France a century ago.—Milwaukee Free Press.

Our Bad College Spelling. MUCH is said in the papers about college English. The people within and without college walls declare that students write badly. But there is a thing more fundamental than their poor English style; it is the matter of their spelling. Many college men, as proved by their essays, cannot spell. They frequently make the mistake of transforming writing into writing, and of doing a thing—writing—an echo probably of the noise of a college dining room.

But poor spelling is not confined to college students. College professors are not free from the blame. A letter like the one before the writer in the distinguished head of a most important department in an American college declares that a certain candidate, whom he has recommended, is "competent." A New England college professor has recently said that in making applications for a place in English several candidates wrote of the salary. Of course, also, a man may lack culture and spell correctly. Spelling is more or less a matter of an arbitrary bit of knowledge. But whatever may be the psychological relations of the art, the schools should teach boys and girls to spell. By incorrect spelling the higher ranges of learning are rendered less impressive.—Leslie's Weekly.

When Divorce Is Not an Evil. HOLESALE and reckless denunciation of divorce, so often heard from the clergy, is not in keeping with reason or with public policy. Divorce is not always an evil. Often it is a blessing.

The woman with a brute for a husband would be in sore straits, indeed, if there were no escape through the law from a union worse than death. The wife who found herself hopelessly bound to a drunken sot might well despair if she could find no relief in divorce laws.

In most States of the Union divorce is not so easy to procure as the ministers would intimate. Most State laws provide that there must be good and sufficient reasons before a husband and wife can be legally separated. Every

Rock-a-by-Babylon in the Forests of This Little-Known Country. Our first meeting with the Sifans presented many ludicrous features, says a writer in Collier's Weekly. We were plinking through the gloom of the forest when our ears were assailed with a concourse of yells which echoed through the supernatural silence with ghostly weirdness. In this forbidding wilderness we had not looked for signs of human habitation, so hastily arranging ourselves in position we prepared ourselves for what seemed an inevitable hostile attack. Long and anxiously we awaited the onslaught of our supposed hidden assailants, when again the peace-disturbing sound echoed almost, it seemed, over our very heads. Glancing upward, the mystery was soon explained, for in the lower branches of the tree we could discern numerous small bundles, each too large for any erry and too small for a windfall.

Both my Klans and Gharikeans, with their superstitious nature, roused by these ghostlike sounds, visibly paled beneath their dusky skins, and gazed nervously round in order to seek means of escape from this enchanted spot. Even I was not a little puzzled and awed until, peering more closely, I became aware of the fact that the disturbing elements which had caused so much concern arose from the fact that we had unwittingly stumbled upon an aboriginal nursery, and that the weird and ghostlike sounds emanated from several hungry and lusty-lunged infants. Then the solemn stillness was broken by our hearty laughter, the Klans and Gharikeans, as if to make amends for their credulous fears, making the woods ring with their forced guffaws.

The Sifan Tibetans, as we subsequently learned, place their children in skin cradles and hang these from the trees in the forests near to their villages, for two reasons—the first, from a belief that they will be instructed by the deities; the second, that their full existence may not be endangered by the abominable stink and squallor of the settled regions. Several times in the day they are visited by their mothers, who provide them with food and remain with them during the night, and in this forest home the child remains until it is 2 or 3 years old and has grown strong and healthy enough to stand the rigors of hardship and disease.

Mormon Missionaries. According to the Mormon authorities, upward of two thousand mission-

ary of experience knows that almost invariably when couples are divorced there are the very best of reasons why they should be. The tangle history of unhappy marriages, as told in the private offices of attorneys, is something appalling. Even the ministers, who deal in theories instead of actualities, would stand aghast at the revelation.

The indissoluble marriage of mismatched men and women would be an unnecessary hardship which the people, whose influence makes the laws, would not stand. Nor is it to be presumed that an indissoluble marriage law would make any difference in the matter of hasty marriages. The couple who embark on matrimony do not look forward to or take into consideration the matter of escape, should the tie become burdensome. The thought of divorce, like remorse, comes later.—Chicago Journal.

The Wonders of the Wireless. THE time is coming when the ardent newsgatherer will go to a hilltop, rig up a small joint pole, point it heavenward, and read the happenings of the world on a dial, when the curious man will thrust his wireless instrument into the azure and pick therefrom the doings of the nations. But just at present Russia is objecting, and raising questions as to the legality of such measures on the part of the Japanese and British—particularly the British, who have a fondness for getting acquainted news no matter to whom it belongs. Russia says the correspondent who purloins any wireless messages shall be treated as a spy. We pass up the question of just how she is to enforce her demands, seeing her navy is mostly in winter quarters for the war.

Everybody has an opinion about the woman who takes down the receiver on a "party line" and studies up on her neighbors. But here is another problem: Is it gentlemanly, according to international law, to speak over the heads of the consuls, and, as the injured New York Times puts it, "cast dispatches on the uninvited air?" Our own government does not feel called upon to settle this little question. The Department of State prefers to wait till some American citizen is involved before it decides on the justice of the Russian claims. But this simply means that public opinion will step in and determine whether it is a breach of neutrality for a man who has something to tell to say it through the atmosphere instead of by copper wire through a strictly guarded office. At present the London Times, whose correspondent is the person in evidence, prefers to speak of the three-mile limit and neutral waters. It contends, with British mildness, that if the British flag flies on the correspondent's ship, there can be no question that it is all right. In the cabinets of the governments there is pondering and palavering, and the result may be a joint note agreeing to the Russian contentions.—San Francisco Argonaut.

Politeness and Crime. OUR language and vocabulary, with our growing slackness, are changing. We are carrying things otherwise inauspicious with a laugh, and calling phrases for the purpose. As has been said, we are still sensitive to such coarse words as "blat" and "steal," but it is vain to deny among ourselves that certain uncalculated doings of to-day forcibly suggest those terms. So we save our face with an indulgent gayer not devoid of humor. We give a twist and a turn to the rapidly changing English language, and the ugly words disappear in the process. When a conductor steals a fare we jealously remark that he is "knocking down on the company," when we steal a ride from the same company and conductor we laughily refer to our success in "beating the game," when we bribe we merely collect "assessments" or "rebates" or "commissions," and so on until we reach a grave definition of "honest graft," which would be more humorous if so many people did not feel that the term applied them with a long wet foot. Now, these expressions and others like them may bear a strong resemblance to thieves' slang, but they merely reflect the language of a people unconsciously retreating to a lower moral level.—Everybody's Magazine.

Helplessness of the Wooden Ships "Agamemnon" and "Sanspareil" Under the Shell-Fire of the Sebastopol Forts, 1854.

The Mississippi valley, exclusive of the narrow humid belt along the Pacific coast. There exists, nevertheless, a fine stratum of lummus in all parts of the country where there is moisture enough to produce annual vegetation. The black earth in Manitoba is from one foot to two feet thick, an amount probably not exceeded over any large area elsewhere in the world. This is not a solid bed of decayed vegetation, but is thoroughly mixed with the upper formation, and forms the black loam. There is no doubt, then, that in the absence of earthworms, this mixing is done by a number of species of burrowing animals, but by far the most important of these are the Geomyiidae, or pocket-gophers.

Gophers are found in the whole of the region west of the Mississippi valley, as far as the Pacific coast, south well into Mexico, and north as far as the Saskatchewan. In other words, their distribution is general over the whole region that is without earthworms, though it is not likely that the rodents had to do with this limitation.—Ernest Thompson Seton in the Century.

An Americanism. A good way to find out how small the world is to do something crooked and try to hide. To get an idea of the earth's immensity try to spread the news of a good deed all over it.—Baltimore American.

It's a smart baby that understands the baby talk its mother indulges in. The wise man who has anything to say to a mule says it to his face.

Discovered at Last. Twinko, twinko, little star, I've discovered what you are. Sure as guns, I vow, I am, You're a hunk o' radium!—Philadelphia Press.

A woman is seldom as strict with her children as she is with her husband.

What a good many churchgoers need is a praying machine that will wind itself.

INCREASE OF DIVORCE.

Philadelphia Rapidly Getting Into Line with the Dakotas.

Figures drawn from the divorce records of the Common Pleas courts of Philadelphia show, when compared with the record of marriages and the population of the city, a surprising increase of divorces in this city, bringing forcibly to mind the ease with which the marriage tie is dissolved in this State, and suggest the possibility that Pennsylvania may before long equal the disgraceful notoriety which has for years attached to certain Western States. Ten or eleven years ago there was on the average one divorce to every twenty-four marriages in Philadelphia, according to the Ledger of that city. Since then the proportion of divorces has been steadily increasing, until in 1903 there was one divorce to 10.9 marriages, and the causes for which the courts grant divorces have been so broadened by statute and by judicial interpretation that allegations to the Dakotas are no longer needed. Cases of collusion are all too common, and the appalling totals of the annual divorces indicate a laxity or indifference on the part of the judges which is deplorable. It is to be noted that there is a wide discrepancy in the divorce record of the several Common Pleas courts of Philadelphia, a difference the significance of which has not been lost upon members of the bar engaged in divorce practice, guiding them in the selection of the courts in which to file such suits.

Philadelphia in respect to the increase of divorce is better than many other American cities and worse than London, but reflects merely the general tendency in the entire country. Sociologists who have studied the problem have shown that divorces are more numerous in the United States in proportion to the population than in any other country of which the records are accessible, and that there have been years in this country when more divorces were granted than in all other civilized countries put together. In 1870 it is said that 3.5 per cent of the marriages ended in divorce; in 1880 the proportion was 4.8 per cent, and in 1884 it had increased to 6.2. In Indiana in 1900 there was a divorce for every 5.7 marriages in the State. The record of the principal cities is given in the following table, which shows the number of marriages and divorces and the number of marriages to one divorce in 1901:

Table with 3 columns: City, Marriages, Divorces. Rows include New York, Buffalo, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, Pittsburgh, Boston, New York, Denver, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, San Francisco, Kansas City.

The statistics of divorce presented in this way are sufficient to justify alarm and to explain the attention which is now being given by sociologists and churchmen to the problem of checking the evil and establishing some uniformity of practice.

EXPLORED ALASKA WILDS. Government Guide Tells of His Experience in the Land of Gold.

A. W. Gummer, who for ten years has been a pilgrim in strange lands, a guide, a scout and a United States customs officer, is a Washington visitor, says the Washington Post. Under the direction of the War Department in 1888 Mr. Gummer was the guide and surveyor of the all-American route from Valdez to Eagle City, Alaska, when the country was an unknown wilderness, where no white man had ever set foot.

"Our party," said Mr. Gummer, "was out of all touch with civilization from February to November, during which time the Spanish-American war was fought. We know nothing of the conflict until we reached Forty-Mile River, 60 miles below Dawson City.

"Our party consisted of five men—Lieut. F. G. Lowe, Stephen Birch, surveyor; two army packers, myself, 11 pack horses and three burros, which we took as an experiment. They lasted only 100 miles, when they were abandoned. The Montana pack ponies were the only ones that could stand the strain even in summer time. In winter only reindeer and dogs can endure the cold.

"Our expedition had to cross the Valdez glacier, an extremely hazardous undertaking on account of the numerous crevasses and fissures of from four to ten feet in width. To get over them we used snow bridges roped together, as they do in Switzerland. Many people have since lost their lives in following this perilous trail, but since then a route has been found by Capt. Abercrombie around the glacier, and no more lives need be sacrificed.

"Within two years a railroad will penetrate the new gold—at Tanana, that are just now causing a sensation among hunters of the precious metal. Valdez, with the most beautiful harbor in the world, and surrounded with mountains 5,000 feet high, will be the future capital of Alaska. The territory has a future splendid beyond the imagination of its most enthusiastic citizens, and in dollars and cents will give greater returns than any territory ever owned or ever to be possessed by the United States.

Lincoln's Passes. Lincoln's humor armed him effectively against the importunate persons with whom, as the head of the nation, he was beset at all times.

During the Civil War a gentleman asked him for a pass through the Federal lines to Richmond.

"I should be happy to oblige you," said Lincoln, "if my passes were respected. But the fact is, within the last two years I have given passes to Richmond to a quarter of a million men, and not one has got there yet."

Wise Fellow. Fuddy—Why were you so awfully afraid of that pistol? You knew well enough that it wasn't loaded.

Duddy—It is the unloaded pistol that always goes off and kills somebody.—Boston Transcript.

What a good many churchgoers need is a praying machine that will wind itself.

QUEER STORIES

Senator Stewart of Nevada enjoys the distinction of being the only man in the Senate who has never been shaved. His beard began to grow when he was 10, and has been growing for 60 years.

John Burns, member of Parliament for Battersea, recently took a 200-mile walk with an infantry battalion in order to see the work done by the army. He made an average of 25 miles a day and declared at the end of the trip that he enjoyed it greatly.

Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana do not allow non-residents to hunt. In Nevada, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Kansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Oklahoma, Indian Territory no license is required. The highest license is that of Wyoming—\$50; the lowest that of Washington—\$1.

An estimate is made that an expense of \$1,000,000 has been borne by two rival horse owners within three years past to bring the record to its present point. The men interested are C. K. G. Hillings, the owner of Lou Dillon, and E. E. Southers, who owns Major Debuter. These two have been knocked from the record at the cost of more than \$250,000 a second.

A recent maritime disaster calls attention to a tiny Maine village of historical interest. Penacook Point was one of the earliest of the New England white settlements, and the ruins of the stone fort, built there in 1680, still stand near the steamboat landing. With a short and bloody history, Indian hostility making the locality uninhabitable, the town site was shortly afterward abandoned.

An interesting article in the shape of an old straw hat that has passed several years of continuous travel on railroads all over the country, arrived at the Brattleboro (Vt.) station recently. The hat was started from Milwaukee and since then has visited all parts of the United States. It is covered with checks bearing the names of the different towns it has visited. It was sent from Brattleboro to Bellows Falls.

Blonde hair is characterized by a high proportion of soda and also of silica; red hair contains a very high proportion of silica; black is poor in soda and poor in silica—the latter being almost entirely lacking—but on the other hand is rich in potassium. Thus we have potassium hair, siliceous hair and sodic hair, and as the hair is continually growing and being out or falling out, it is evident that by means of the hair there is both constant and important elimination of certain mineral compounds.

The largest organ in Maine is at the Universalist Church, at Portland. It is over 5,000 pipes, the smallest a piccolo, being half an inch long, and the largest, a double open diapason, or 32-foot "C" pipe. The vast human stop alone, having 60 pipes, cost \$200. The pipe rooms, of which there are four, are each as large as an ordinary bed chamber. The organ was voiced by J. H. Brown, who voiced the organ at Westminster Abbey. It has three manuals, and is blown by a three-horse-power electric motor.

WAYS OF THE MOSQUITO. How Some of the Adults Hibernates During the Winter.