TIMELY TOPICS.

England and Germany lead the world in the manufacture of beer. There are 27,050 breweries in England, which made last year 990,000,000 gallons of beer, while Germany has 25,092, which produced 90,000,000 gallons in the same period. Think of it!

The alarmist views as to the increase of insanity, which have lately been forced into prominence, are not countenanced by the commissioners in lunacy of England. They state in their report that the apparent increase is due almost wholly to accumulations in the asylums of the chronic insane.

An English statistician maintains that the daily increase of wealth in the United States is upward of $25,000,000, or about $838,000,000 a year, which is one-third as much as the increase in wealth of the whole of the rest of the world. England, whose increase in wealth is next to our own, makes only a profit on all her business of $300,000,000 a year, or but a little over a third of our own.

Now York city has about completed improvements which will prevent any future water famine in the city by adding 10,000,000 gallons of water a day to the Croton supply of 98,000,000. This extra water supply comes from Rye lake, which is fed exclusively by springs. The new reservoir covers an area of 260 acres. From this an iron pipe, four feet in diameter, is laid a distanee of over fifteen miles, connecting with the Croton mains.

A Frenchman has sent a circular to all his friends asking why they cultivate a beard. Among the answers 9 stated, "because I wish to avoid shaving;" 12 "because I do not wish to catch cold;" 5 "because I wish to conceal bad teeth;" 1 "because I wish to conceal the length of my nose;" 6 "because I am a soldier;" 21 "because I was a soldier;" 65 "because my wife likes it:" 28 "because my love likes it;" 15 answered that they wore no beards.

Among the needs of Mexico, ex-Governor Rice is quoted as saying, are "convenient and modern hotels upon the system now so popular in the United States. There is also needed machinery for preparing the fibers of Mexico for the manufacture of carpets, rope, matting, and also paper. Thousands upon thousands of tons of fiber annually go to waste in that country which could be used here and in Europe for the manufacture of paper. It is so abundant and cheap that ere many years shall pass this great industry will be one of the most important, and furnish a large part of the material for the entire world."

Many plucky engineers have crawled down on the cowcatcher of their locomotive as the machine was rushing along at the rate of twenty miles an hour and snatched a child or a baby from certain destruction beneath the ponderous wheels of the iron horse, but none has yet or probably will ever have again the experience of Christoval Mendoza, an engineer on the Mexican railroad. The other day, as the train to Mexico was nearing Jalapa, he discovered an old beggar, 101 years old, on the track. The old fellow being deaf and imbecile paid no attention to the shrieks of the whistle, so Christoval climbed down on the cowcatcher and snatched the old fellow, almost mummied with fright, up into a safe berth beside him, just as the cruel monster was about to grind him into a thousand fragments.

In an address delivered by Sir Richard Temple on "Economic Science and Statistics," before the British Association at Montreal, it was stated that the population of the British Empire consists of 39,000,000 Anglo-Saxons, 188,000,000 Hindoos, and 88,000,000 Mohamedans, etc.—a total of 315,000,000. The area of the Empire and its dependencies is 10,000,000 square miles. The annual revenue is: United Kingdom, £89,000,000; India £74,000,000; colonies and dependencies, £40,000,000; total, £264,000,000. The number of trained soldiers is 850,000, ot whom about 700,000 are of the dominant race. In addition, there are 560,000 policemen in the Empire. The school attendance is: United Kingdom, 2,250,000; Canada, 860,000; Australia, 611,000; India, 2,200,000; a total, in the Empire, of 8,921,000 pupils.

Children usually demand sugar in large quantities, and in some form it should be given them. According to the *Cultivator* there are few more agreeable or healthful forms in which to secure it than in fruit, and especially in good, sweet apples. An abundance of sweet apples, ripe and luscious, should be had in every household where there are children. Prepared in various ways they are important in the dietary of the whole family. They supply sugar in a pure form. Baked with cream they are delicious. Few breakfast dishes are superior to slices of sweet apples fried in butter. Cut the slices across the apple, leaving the skin on, and cutting out the core. This dish will take the place of meats for two or three days in the week. Few fruits have in them as many elements for the sustainihg of life and health as the apple. In some countries an almost exclusive diet for weeks is made of apples prepared in various ways.

As it is generally known, the Dominion of Canada comprises the seven provinces of Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, all having a population of 4,500,000. The mistaken idea prevails in the United States that the executive authority is vested in the governor general. This is not so, that functionary simply exercising the authority of the queen, who is he.self the direct ruler. The salary of the governor general is $50,000 per year. He has thirteen advisers, comprising a cabinet, and known as the queen's privy council of Canada. These men receive salaries of $7,000 per year, and $1,000 extra for each parliamentary session, excepting the premier, who receives $8,000 and the additional $1,000 per session. The total of these salaries is $155,000, which, compared with the $100,000 paid the President and his cabinet, flavors of extravagance. The departments are of justice, of finance, of agriculture, of state, of war, of customs, of inland revenue, of the interior, of marine and fisheries, and of the postoffice.

A natural curiosity that bids fair to outrival the famous Mammoth Cave of Kentucky has just been discovered on the farm of John Davis, who resides six miles east of Jacksboro, Campbell county, Tenn. Only one chamber of the cave has been explored thus far, and that only partly, in which prehistoric mummies, with sandals on their feet, in excellent state of preservation, have been found, some petrified, others preserved by the salt of the cave. The walls of the chamber are decorated with paintings of extinct or imaginary animals A large stream abounds with blind fish. Mr. Davis has captured a species of jackal or red fox, and the cave seems to be full of both animal and vegetable life. Crickets as large as English sparrows hop or leisurely walk off when alarmed, and rats as large as jack rabbits run about in semi-domesticated recognition. Footprints of exquisite mold are well defined in the hardened mud, and miniature forests along the banks of the river are clothed in snow-white foliage and sensitive flowers.

A rather ingenious expedient for eluding the payment of octroi duty was hit upon lately by certain enterprising individuals in France. Cholera having made its appearance at Cette, in the Herault, and in the outlying villages, it occurred to these persons to turn the circumstance to their own advantage. They arrayed themselves, according to the local papers, in black, obtained a hearse and a certain number of coffins, and went backward and forward from the town to the communes outside it. It chanced, however, that the attention of the authorities was attracted by the unusual number of apparent interments that took place during the night, and, upon inquiries being made, it was found that were these funerals all bona fide there must have been more persons buried from the environs of Cette than had died. This being an obvious impossibility the hearse was stopped by the octroi officials, and the coffin in it was opened, with the result that instead of a corpse a quantity of alcohol was found, as well as soap and other wares liable to pay duty, all of which were seized.

In the neighborhood of Amsterdam, Holland, writes a correspondent of the *Garden*, there are over 150 market gardens, in the greater portion of which such kinds of vegetables as it is usual to forward under glass are grown, while some are devoted exclusively to Haricot beans, cabbages and other things commonly cultivated as field crops. The Dutch market gardeners are a laborious, pains-taking class, but, seldom journeying far from home, are wedded to old ways, some of their appliances being of a very primitive description. Thus, for instance, the sashes of their frames are glazed with small squares bedded in lead, just like the old-fashioned casement windows, a fact which seems most strange, seeing that that style of glazing garden frames has for many years been quite obsolete in European gardens generally. The frames themselves are of a rough description, being formed of thick beards, being generally some eighty feet long and divided into compartments at need. Where ground is so valuable, space is naturally economized as much as posssible, there being but about one and a half feet between each row of frames. Each market garden is surrounded by hedges and divided into two or several portions by screens or transverse hedges. In a level country like Holland, where there are but few natural breaks to the fury of the winds, some such kind of artificial protection is almost indispensable, and especially where a large number of glass frames are employed. One or more of these compartments are occupied by the dwelling-house, sheds, cellars for vegetables, and frames; the remainder are devoted to the various kinds of crops which may be made a specialty of.

The demand for animals for exhibition in Europe and in civilized America has armed enterprizing hunters with net and trap, and sent them far into the wilds of unexplored Africa. The Soudan, a part of that continent to which attention and even anxiety are now directed, has long been a hunting-ground for the providers of the great dealers like Mr. Jamrach, whose repository at East-end, London, has been so frequently described. The difficulty of catching some of the animals is very great. A hippopotamus, for instance, may be netted; but he is a very big "fish" to land safe and well, to send over hundreds of miles of Soudan tracks, to ship sound and in good condition and to land at a European port after a sea voyage. The cost of such an undertaking is very great and not unfrequently is incurred in vain. Delicate animals torn from the steaming swamps and reedy thickets in which they delight are very apt, after all the pains and risk of capturing them, to die upon their enslavers' hands. Perhaps the king of beasts is as handy as any of his subjects. At least he suffers less in captivity than the majority of them, if we may accept as proof the frequent leonine families which bring rejoicing to the Zoological Gardens of London and Dublin. So keen is the pursuit of genuine wild beasts in the Soudan and the regions adjoining that within a very few years travelers have noted a remarkably falling-off in big game. Between the sportsmen who go fully equipped for slaughter from this and other countries, the natives, now better armed than formerly, and the snarers who seek live specimens for Mr. Jamrach and his brethren, the monarchs of desert and forest are having a hard time of it just now, and have little to thank steam for in bringing the white man into the heart of their fastnesses.

A Fish-Eating Plant.

There is a little plant, common enough in our ponds and known as the bladder-wort, which has suddenly sprung into importance for breeders of carp. The bladder-wort (genus Utricularia) is a rootless plant, and of still water, and usually found floating half in and half out of the water, the branching and stem-like leaves forming the submerged float from which rises the flower stem. To the leaves are attached curiously insect-like bladders filled with water, and varying in size in the different species, reaching at times a diameter of one-fifth of an inch.

It was formerly, and with much probability, supposed that these bladders served the purpose of floats; for until a few years ago it was taken for granted that air and not water filled them. It is now known, however, that the bladders serve a more useful purpose than merely to keep the head of the plant above water; they are the digestive organs of the Utricularia, and at the same time are so construted as to form a very ingenious but extremely simple trap for catching food. It is into these bladders that thousands of carp eggs find their unwitting way, together with many insects, crustacea, and other tiny objects, both animate and inanimate.

It is only recently that the Utricularia has been accused of destroying carp eggs, but for nearly thirty years it has been known as a receiver of small insects and crustaceans, and it has been known as an insect feeder for at least twenty years.

The bladder is pear-shaped, with an opening at the small end. Around the mouth are antennæ-like projections or bristles, which, according to Darwin, are for the purpose of warding off and keeping out insects of too great size. The mouth is closed by a valve which yields readily to light pressure, but offers an immovable barrier to the once captured creature. The utmost strength compatible with such a structure has apparently been attained. The valve is a thin and transparent plate, and, by means of the water behind it, is made to stand out a bright spot, which Darwin thinks may attract prey. Something certainly attracts the tiny denizens of the water, for they swim up to the mouth and crawl into the bladder by the readily yielding door. As there is no seductive secretion here, as in the case of many insect-destroying plants, the great naturalist's surmise is probably correct.

Some of the insectivorous plants, on catching their prey, at once pour out a digestive fluid analogous to the gastric juice of the human stomach, but with the Utricularia it is not so. The insects or other food when caught in the bladder are merely captives, and swim about in their confined quarters with eager activity in their endeavor to find an outlet, until asphyxia for lack of oxygen comes on. Even now the plant makes no effort to digest the animal food, but waits patiently until decay takes place, and the animal matter is by putrefaction resolved into fluids which the numerous papillæ lining the bladder can absorb.

Examination and repeated experiment proved conclusively that the greedy little bladders were making sad havoc with the fish, and in consequence carp breeders are bidden to open war vigorously on Utricularia and all its species. It may seem at a hasty glance that the small bladders can hardly be responsible for any very extensive destruction of eggs or small fish, but the doubters of the ability of insignificant agents, acting together, to produce stupendous effects may be referred to the microscopic rhizopods or the earth worms, each in their own way performing wonderful feats in the way of earth building and earth preserving.—*Scientific American.*

Tired Eyes.

People speak about their eyes being fatigued, meaning that the retina, or seeing portion of the brain, is fatigued, but such is not the case, as the retina harldly ever gets tired. The fatigue is in the inner and outer muscles attached to the eyeball and the muscle of accommodation, which surrounds the lens of the eye. When a near object is to be looked at, this muscle relaxes and allows the lens to thicken, increasing its refractive power. The inner and outer muscles to which I referred are used in covering the eye on the object to be looked at, the inner one being especially used when a near object is to be looked at. It is in the three muscles mentioned that the fatigue is felt, and relief is secured temporarily by closing the eyes or gazing at far distant objects. The usual indication of strain is a redness of the rim of the eyelid, betokening a congested state of the inner surface, accompanied with some pain. Rest is not the proper remedy for a fatigued eye, but the use of glasses of sufficent power to render unnecessary so much effort to accommodate the eye to vision.—*Scientific American.*

A new drawing-room car has been recently made, in which, by a simple device, the heavy chairs are made to fold at joints; the seats sink to the floor, the mirrored panels swing open, reaching within a foot of the car center, and, presto, the drawing-room is divided into ten sections, each affording a bed-room in which there are two beds, a mirror, wardrobe hooks and other convenienae

BIG AND LITTLE FEASTS.

Lark Pudding in London—Ready-Cooked Viands for the Poor.

Being bidden to one of London's civic dinners, writes the correspondent of an American paper, I partook of lark pudding. I do think it is a shame to put the lark which "at Heaven's gate sings," into a pudding, but being put into a pudding the lark is exceedingly nice. I am told that lark pudding is quite an extensive and doubly as rare as bird's nest soup, and certainly the unanimity with which the guests, on the occasion I refer to, called for it, bears out the suggestion. Perhaps Delmonico himself could not have suggested a rarer menu than that which the Shipwright's laid before us. Certainly it was a gorgeous affair, from the soup to the iced pudding, and afterward to the cigars (great fat fellows of that deliciously loose and crumbly make about the end that domestic workmen cannot imitate). That is one way in which Londoners—the great corporations and city guilds dine.

At the height of the banquet it must have been 9 o'clock. From the majestic Mansion House, which sees literally hundreds of such dinners during every every lord mayor's term, to the New Cut, is but a short distance. Here, as in all parts of London, there are served up at 8 o'clock precisely, in the ham and beef shops, huge dishes of boiled beef, baked pork and pease pudding. It is not too much to say that 100,000 families in London take their evening (and heartiest) meal from these shops, carrying home the steaming viands in hot basins, at a cost of from one penny, to say, ninepence each family! (Two to eighteen cents.) The meat, of course, cannot be obtained for this smaller sum, but a huge platter of pease pudding may, and there is no dish more wholesome and sustaining. To the very poor—not to the poorest, poor creatures, for they are unable to obtain even this cheap food frequently—the hot joints and hot pudding served from 8 o'clock until midnight, and the savory saveloys that are taken steaming from the boiler, are a great boon.

I have often gazed with admiration upon the deft manner in which these meat shopkeepers ply their long knives. They seem to be able to cut off a pound of meat without diminishing the joint. And to do it again and again. I am positive that I have seen them shave off a slice of ham that was no thicker than the paper on which these lines will be printed.

Such as cannot muster enough money to indulge in a steak-and-knidney pudding, which costs anywhere from four to ten pence, according to how much steak and kidney there is in it, and of what variety they are, can at all events find a healthy and cheap repast in the fried fish shop. There is a great plenty in England, and at all seasons of the year, of a fish called plaice. It is something like a flounder and something like a sole, but it is neither, and has a distinct flavor. The fried fish shopkeeper cuts this plaice in two, peppers, salts, and flours him, and pops him into a gigantic vat of boiling grease. In ten minutes he is done. Scores of thousands, especially in the winter time, are nightly customers of the fried fish shop. I have tried plaice so cooked and have liked him very much. The great consideration about him, however, is his cheapness. A satisfying portion of fried plaice, for one, can be oblained for a single penny, while if the purchaser desires to expend more, he can get at the same place a three-cornered paper full of chipped potatoes for another penny—four cents of our money in all. Suppose that a man were landed in New York with but twenty-five cents in the world—and hungry. How long could he support life on it? Certainly not more than two days—that is before he began to starve. Twenty-five cents are a shilling and a half-penny of English money. For a penny here a man may have a dish of whelks (a toothsome shell-fish with pepper and vinegar), or two very large and repulsive-looking oysters, or in the winter time a cup of hot eel soup, or meat or fruit pie, or a plate of mussels.

The Transmutation of Metals.

The Arabians no doubt derived their ideas of the transmutation of metals into gold and the belief in immunity from death by the use of the philosopher's stone from China. Among all the metals with which the alchemist worked, mercury was pre-eminent, and this is stated to be really the philosopher's stone, of which Geber, Kalid and others spoke in the times of the early caliphs? In China it was employed excessively as a medicine. On nights when dew was falling, sufficient was collected to mix with the powder of cinnabar, and this was taken until it led to a serious disturbance of the bodily functions. In the ninth century an emperor, and in the tenth a prime minister died from the effects of an overdose of mercury. Chinese medical books say it takes 200 years to produce cinnabar; in 300 years it becomes lead; in 500 years more it becomes silver, and then by obtaining a transforming substance called "vapor of harmony," it becomes gold. This doctrine of the transformation of mercury into other metals is 2,000 years old in China.

The Antiquity of Advertising.

In all ages people seem to have needed a reminder of their wants and the advertisement enabled the busy or the lazy to supply them without extra trouble. We find no mention of the peripatetic advertisements which now greet our eyes on street corners, in various outre and ridiculous garbs, but perhaps they may have had their origin from antiquity and the peripatetic philosophers, who studied and discussed their learned theories while perpetually perambulating the walks of the gymnasium.—*Philadelphia Times.*

His Love was Returned.

"Araminta!" he exclaimed, "I love you dearly, devotedly. I love you with unspeakable fervor. Do not turn your sweet face aside, dearest, but speak to me some word which will make me supremely happy. Tell me that my love is returned." Araminta looked into his face with a frankness that filled Adolphus' heart with a comforting rest, a reassuring hope. "You tell me you love me, Dolly," she began, "and you ask me to return that love, I do, I do return it. I've no use for it." The word had been spoken, the die was cast, the verdict had been pronounced, and fiat had gone forth. And Adolphus went out into the silent night, and Araminta went to bed.—*Boston Transcript.*

In a Mexican Market.

From dawn till dusk in a Mexican market one hears the cake vender shouting in Spanish "Fat little cakes! Fat little cakes! Here are good fat little cakes!" While the fruit peddler, the candy boy, the seller of beverages, and a hundred others carol in concert their various strains. "Who wants mats from Pueblo—mats of twenty yards?" cries the seller of woven straw. "Salt beef! Salt beef!" interrupts the butcher; and the vender of poultry, sitting among her fowls in the sun, sings lazily by the hour, "Ducks and chickens! Oh, my soul! good ducks and chickens!"

MASON & HAMLIN commenced as melodeon makers in 1854. They soon introduced the improved instrument now known as the organ, or American organ, as it is termed in Europe. The new instrument proved so superior that it soon took the place of everything else in this country, being adapted and manufactured by all who had previously made melodeons, and many others who were induced to commerce the business by the rapidly growing demand. Now about 80,000 American organs are made and sold yearly. Those by the Mason & Hamlin Company have always stood at the head, being acknowledged the best. The same makers are now producing improved Upright Pianofortes, which they believe, are destined to rank as high as their organs have done.—*Boston Traveller.*

THE love of women, the smiles of children are the delights of life.

THE cost of the public printing now amounts to $3,000,000 annually.

THE castor bean plant is said to kill grass hoppers by the million.

IN China Foo Chow means "Happy City."

PRIZE fighters belong to the fray-ternity.