EDITORIALS

Opinions of Great Papers on Important Subjects.

SPELLING REFORM TENDENCIES.

A STUDY of spelling reform by F. Sturgis Allen shows that there is less evidence of change of spelling in British usage than there is in American. Shall we spell "aesthetic" or "esthetic?" British publishers do not take to the latter. On the other hand, "American publishers who publish for the British as well as the American market," Mr. Allen tells us, "find that adopting the e (which is considered an Americanism) tends to injure the sale of their books to the British trade." Considerable changes, he adds, are taking place in American usage in the direction of returning to British usage; as, for example, "honour" for honor, "centre" for center and "traveller" for traveler. After all, American publishers who want the widest market for books of a certain class have to consider the fastidious buyers in Australia, Canada, South Africa and other British colonies as well as in the United States. It thus happens that the personal interest of many bookmakers in this country run counter to the project of extended "spelling reform" endowed by Mr. Carnegie. The typewriter and typesetting machines seem to be chiefly responsible for the common substitution for the dipthongs, as the machines would become much more complicated if they provided for them. "Should the dictionaries," Mr. Allen asks, "give the preference to 'e' forms when usage does not, without indicating that usage prefers the dipthong forms in those cases?" Usage, after all, is and should be the master. The time is past when dictionary makers could undertake to dictate.—Baltimore Sun.

FUTURE OF SAN FRANCISCO.

SAN FRANCISCO started to rebuild even before she had any assurance that she could establish herself more securely against further earthquakes. That showed the quality of her courage. It has, nevertheless, been giving her satisfaction to hear the testimony of earthquake experts and architects and builders to the effect that she can make her buildings strong enough to resist even worse shocks than they have experienced.

Professor Nakamura, of the Imperial University of Tokio, the architect sent by Japan to inspect conditions at San Francisco, reported some time ago that one of the great causes of damage had been the poor quality of mortar and the faulty construction with the use of hollow tiling and fire blocks instead of concrete. He gave the San Francisco people formulas for the kind of mortar which, according to Japanese experience, will resist shocks, and he told them that even brick buildings, if properly set in mortar, can be made proof against damage.

The writer on applied science in the current Forum adds his testimony as to the stability of the steel frame buildings, when properly braced and when established on sufficiently solid foundations. For the smaller buildings re-enforced concrete—that is, concrete with an imbedded metallic network—is approved for its resistance both to shock and to fire.

Even the light and water problems of San Francisco are said to be susceptible of entirely successful solutions, both from technical and from commercial standpoints. The substitution of electricity for gas will do away with one of the worst of the fire dangers—that coming from the gas mains the earthquake has broken. The water pipes can probably be made secure against the worst breaks by laying them on concrete foundations. Indirectly San Francisco is planning to make great conflagrations improbable hereafter by establishing a system of broad boulevards, which the fire will not be apt to leap, even if the water supply is in part interrupted. Some of these boulevards are planned to be put through at once, others after five years and others after ten years.

San Francisco has every reason to feel confident that it is as safe as any other city, and much safer than many, against the recurrence of disaster with destructive results akin to those of last April.—Chicago Record Herald.

CHECKS ON PROSPERITY.

THE rich bear little of the general burden of taxation, in any country, proportionately to the poor. The British Chancellor of the Exchequer hints that an attempt will be made to throw the income tax more heavily on the rich. The Liberal party may also adopt the principle, practiced in several European countries, of taxing income from property more heavily than income based on effort. Prussia, Saxony and Wurtemberg tax income from property about three times as much as income from work, and Denmark twice as much. The principle is recognized in Italy. The only objection to a progressive income tax is the encouragement that it gives to perjury, and this objection it shares with the ordinary forms of taxing personal property. Income taxes, inheritance taxes, and laws in restraint of monopoly are all efforts, of course, toward the one goal of so arranging the laws that society shall grant to the individual only as much as is for the material and spiritual welfare of the race. Massachusetts has just declared, through her Supreme Court, that no person or body in that State shall make it a condition of sales that the purchaser shall not handle the goods of other dealers—a significant example of what is to be expected more every year in the direction of preventing the individual or the corporation from having too much in common with the supposed disposition of the much-wronged hog.—Collier's Weekly.

THE COLLEGE ADDRESSES.

WHEN a man is called upon to speak to college students he usually weighs his words most carefully. However extreme a partisan may be in other circumstances, when setting forth his views in the presence of those who are learning about the great problems of life he strives to be judicial and fair-minded, consequently, the annual college addresses afford a distinct guide to what the leaders of thought really think.

Those addresses this year were remarkable for their cheerful optimism and for their faith in the honesty and uprightness of the men of the present generation. There were some exceptions, but the rule was that the young men about to begin the struggle for survival were told that the old-fashioned virtues have not gone out of style, that honesty and uprightness are still highly prized, that greed for gain is as despicable as it has always been, and that the road to success lies along the straight and narrow way which has commended itself to men by centuries of experience.

This word is needed. It is important that a true and wholesome standard shall be held up for admiration at the time when young men begin to find a standard necessary.

It is a most gratifying sign of the firmness of the moral foundations that neither the colleges nor the men whom they honor by invitations to speak have been swept from their feet by the tide of sordid accusations—too many, alas! proved—that has lately been flooding the country.—Youth's Companion.

THINK PLANTS HAVE EYES.

Scientists Thus Explain Why They Seek to Avoid the Sun's Glare.

Plants are by no means so stupid or so helpless as they commonly get credit for being. No matter how a beech happens to be placed in the ground, the root will turn down and the stem grow up into the air and there manage somehow or other to find its way to the nearest support.

Especially remarkable is the behavior of vegetables toward light. House plants, as every one knows, grow in the direction of the window, but if the pot be turned halfway round the leaves will nevertheless manage to screw themselves back into their old position, and the sunflower will "rubber round" all day long so as to stare at the sun. In temperate countries leaves grow at right angles to the rays of light to get as much of it as possible; in the tropics they set themselves edgewise to get as little.

Evidently, then, plants come at least as near seeing as do some animals. Pretty much all that has been known about the matter, however, is that they attend only to the blue rays of the sun; for though they will grow perfectly well in red or yellow light they show not the slightest inclination to turn toward it.

A German botanist, Haberlandt, who for many years has been studying these problems, has concluded that the whole upper surface of each leaf is a sort of compound eye. The thin, translucent skin which in most plants covers the green, succulent tissue of the leaf is itself, in certain cases, composed of innumerable rounded cells. These, thinks Professor Haberlandt, are so many minute lenses which concentrate the light upon the living substance below and enable the plant to distinguish between light and darkness, or between weak light and strong, though not, of course, to see objects. Such primitive lenses he finds in the fig, ivy, magnolia, wood-sorrel and other plants. Certain plants, like the pepper and the balsam, have in addition little eye spots which in structure approach the eyes of many of the simplest animals and appear, in a sense, to be real eyes.

At any rate, plants do act as if they could see and Professor Haberlandt has found that each of these supposed sense organs can be made to print a bright spot on a photographic plate.—Collier's.

PUTTING HIS FOOT IN IT.

Mrs. Skrappy—Oh! Why didn't I marry a sensible man?
Skrappy—Because, madam, a sensible man would never have married you.

"The American Lady."

The home life of a typical American lady is the sincerest index of her ego. In it she indelibly expresses herself. Here it is that she exercises to the maximum her potentiality and that her personality scores. Presumably she is a wife and mother. Her age? Pouf! A lady of cleverness nonpluses Time.

She is her son's best girl, her daughter's chum, a hostess sans reproche. She rules her home with thrift and skill. Her husband safely trusts in her, and her price is above her birthstone.

Her house is beautiful, its atmosphere fine and clear. She is never too busy to listen to her "boy" or advise her "girl" or read to their father. Young people en masse delight in her. She is their ideal mother and friend. Laughter is never hushed in her home. Music is welcomed and budding merit of whatever sort finds in her an earnest and sympathetic ear.—Thomas Antrim, in Lippincott's.

We are in favor of throwing out that word "palatial" unless the house described has a closet in every room.

LITERARY LITTLEBITS

Professor Ernst Haeckel's important work, "The Riddle of the Universe," has recently been translated into Japanese, Chinese and Hebrew. At different times the volume has appeared in twelve other languages, while more than 200,000 copies of the German original have been sold.

Rev. John Francis Lee, pastor of the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, of Norfolk, Va., is attracting much attention in the South as a poet, many believing that he is the coming negro poet of America, taking up the minstrel harp dropped by the late Paul Laurence Dunbar.

The Russian military commander, Gen. Kuropatkin, has finished his historical work in relation to the causes of the Russian defeat in the far east and the English translation will doubtless soon be got under way. Gen. Kuropatkin undertakes to prove that his plans were repeatedly upset by orders from St. Petersburg.

The astonishing fact has just come to light that Professor Richard Garnett, librarian of the British Museum, who died recently, for years had devoted much time to the "black art" of astrology. Even more extraordinary is the circumstance that the business men of New York and other cities regularly consulted him regarding contemplated ventures.

The novel-reader who fondly believes that his favorite "refreshers" are of imagination all compact is much deceived. The novelist of genius is even more given to the taking of notes than is the lesser writer who turns off stories "in the way of trade." Balzac, his sister has told us, wherever he went studied what he saw, setting down everything which revealed a character or painted a situation. His "meat-safe" was the odd name he gave to the book which held these notes. Dickens recorded diligently his observations of peculiarity in person as well as strange incidents, suggestive names, available scenery and the like. Even one so little given to "realism" in the modern sense as Hawthorne had an ample store of useful notes. Wilkie Collins is quoted by an old acquaintance, in Chambers' Journal, as declaring that he founded nearly all his plots on facts, on incidents he had heard of or read, or on a desire to expose or correct some abuse of his time. Great was his wrath when he was accused of introducing sensational and improbable episodes in his book, "The Woman in White." He knew, he said, of very few instances in which fiction exceeded the probability of reality; and then he revealed the source of many of his plots in the shape of a dilapidated collection of records of French crime picked up on an old bookstall in Paris. "Here is a prize!" he exclaimed, and so it turned out to be. "The Woman in White" was derived from those mouldering records. "The plot of that," said Collins, "has been called outrageous; the substitution and burial of the mad girl for Lady Glyde, and the incarceration of Lady Glyde as the mad girl. It was true, and it was from the trial of the villain of the plot—Count Fosco of the novel—I got my story."

SEARCH GLOBE FOR RUBBER.

Many Perils Are Encountered in Gathering the Gum.

From Southern Mexico in the north to Northern Paraguay in the south; from the Atlantic on the east, right through the devious wandering of the many branches and tributaries of the mighty Amazon and right on, out to the Pacific, on the west; through the mysterious, trackless and utterly unknown solitudes of the Paraguayan and Bolivian Chocos out into Peru, the rubber hunters are at work on the plants and trees put ready to their use by the bounteous hand of nature. Where they go on their journeys or precisely what they do, no white man knows to this day, or is ever likely to know, says the Philadelphia Ledger.

Less than a year ago I met with and spoke in English to an Italian merchant in the wilds of Matto Grosso, the northwestern province of Brazil, whose capital city is five weeks' journey from the seat of government at Rio de Janeiro. For twenty years he had not heard the sound of English voice and during all those years rubber has been flowing through his hands, down the giant River Paraguay, on its way to the markets of the world, via Buenos Ayres or Montevideo. Yet of its actual production he knows little.

To skip, in spirit, from the northeast coast of South America across the south Atlantic to tropical Africa, the Congo, the Gold Coast, the Zambesi, Uganda and other parts, is not a difficult undertaking. But here all is changed, and, instead of having noble forest trees at his disposal, the rubberhunter finds himself dependent on snaky, climbing, twisting vines for his rubber supplies, vines which usurp every inch of territory they can invade, and render a passage through the forests a matter of great difficulty and some danger.

These vines, known as "landolphias," of which there are several species, are members of the natural order apocynaceæ and are common to the whole of tropical Africa. They differ from the American trees, in that they produce rubber in the center of the stem, as well as from the cells underlying the inner cambium, but what quantity each plant will produce there are no data to base an estimate upon.

Although the landolphias form the main source of the African rubber supply, yet there is at least one family of trees which yields a supplementary contribution to the sum total. The funtumia or kicksia, of which there are two species, elastica and Africana, was worked to a considerable extent a quarter of a century ago, but it does not now seem to be a fashionable plant to cultivate a close associationship with. It resembles the hevea to some degree, but is smaller, of softer growth, and requires a little less rainfall to luxuriate.

Turning to India, and to Asia generally, it will not be found that the continent is rich in indigenous rubber-bearing plants. The ficus elastica, the Indian rubber plant of the window gardener, is found in Assam and Burma and the federated Malay states, but its produce is of very inferior quality. Certain climbers also yield rubber, the three chief ones being the urceola, chonemorpha, and the Willoughbia. The fact that Para and other rubbers are being cultivated in India, etc., is sufficient proof of the poorness of the continent of Asia in indigenous rubber-bearing plants.

Ceara rubber is collected by stabbing the tree in a number of places close together, and as the juice exudes it coagulates in the air, and is rolled up into balls by the collectors. It is usually in a dirty state when it comes to the market.

The product of the ficus elastica and the other Asiatic plants is usually simply sun-dried; the rubber from the former can be identified at a glance by its peculiar red color.

MINE FOUND BY A BADGER.

Prospectors Digging Him Out Discovered a Rich Claim.

N. H. George, Santa Fe yardmaster, has taken a layoff of three weeks and gone to Nevada to develop a gold mining claim which he has there. There is quite a story back of his going.

Mr. George grubstaked an old miner who had struck a streak of bad luck. This miner finally found some excellent surface indications in the Nevada mountains and staked his claim. The prospects were so good that Mr. George his brother and his brother-in-law took three adjoining claims. The old grizzled miner worked away all winter on the funds supplied him by Mr. George. His developments were encouraging, but did not pan out large quantities of the yellow metal.

A short time since another old miner in hard luck came past the first miner's claim carrying his kit of tools with him. Mr. George's friend was naturally lonesome and invited the stranger to take a claim. After looking over the situation this stranger decided to do so. An evening or two later the two miners sat on a ledge of rock talking when a badger came into sight. The miners gave chase and the badger ran into a hole on the stranger's claim.

They went to work with their picks and soon dug the badger out, and in so doing they made a remarkable discovery. His bed in the bottom of the hole was made on a big chunk of the very richest of gold ore. The gold in the stone on which he lay was worth $10,000. In this way they discovered a rich vein of gold bearing quartz which runs through both their mines as well as those belonging to Mr. George, his brother and the brother-in-law. Mr. George's trip to Nevada is for the purpose of fully investigating his new gold mine.—Wellington Mail.

Ants Are Tough Ones.

Ants are really very long lived, considering their minuteness. Janet had two queens under observation for ten years, and one of Sir John Lubbock's ant pets lived into her fifteenth year.

Ants are very tenacious of life after severe injury. Following loss of the entire abdomen they sometimes live two weeks, and in one case a headless ant, carefully decapitated by antiseptic surgery, lived for forty-one days. A carpenter ant after being submerged eight days in distilled water came to life upon being dried, so that they are practically proof against drowning.

They can live for long periods without food; in one case the fast lasted nearly nine months before the ant starved to death.—Scientific American.

Mystery No Longer.

"I see Prof. Reid says the earth has a big hole in its center."

"Ah, perhaps that explains why the world is such a hollow mockery."

Women can throw as well as they can run.