TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

IT is a cold day when the iceman brings a big lump.

IT is possible to become bad under the best of circumstances.

SOME strikes are commendable; for instance, that strike of a boy choir in a Baltimore church.

NOTHING renders the mind so narrow and so little as the want of social intercourse.

ONE sporting authority says that the two-minute horse is coming fast. How else could he come?

REV. PARKHURST is out in a new demand for the New York police to enforce the laws. What! and go to jail?

JAPAN will be obliged to whip China piece by piece, but she seems determined that each piece is to receive a sufficiently terrific drubbing.

A LONDONER has invented a "pneumatic skate." It is doubtful however, whether one can get ahead faster on it than he can on the old-fashioned liquid "skate."

THE Czar and his eldest son are said to be crazy. As their appears no particular reason for believing the story, the matter is probably less serious than at first appears.

THE Acme Puncture-Proof Company is one of the new Chicago corporations licensed by the Secretary of State. If the name goes for anything it certainly is not a "soap-bubble" concern.

THE French are engaged in a laudable and statesmanlike attempt to steal Madagascar. This is different from the effort of some hungry Missouri farmers to steal a treasure box. It is on a larger scale.

THE latest mean thing said about it by brutal man is that every woman ought to be allowed to vote twice in succession: once to express her convictions and once after she has changed her mind.

BOSTON is clamoring for a half-cent coin. The Transcript says: "Give us back the half-cent coin, and let us learn our sorest needed lesson—economy. The half-cent was coined from 1792 to February, 1857. Why was it discontinued?"

THE Chinese General whose legs enabled him to run away from the scene of slaughter and defeat fast enough to tell the Emperor that he had whipped the Japanese and get a valuable present for it could make a fortune in America selling gold bricks.

A TEXAN focused the sun's rays upon the head of a friend so that the locks, redolent of bay rum, burst into flame. Warm-haired people are proverbially quick-tempered, and so there is little surprise that the man whose scalp now resembles a map of the Minnesota forest fires, fails to see the joke.

FROM an article in the London Times it appears that one of the prime results of the recent English Navy maneuvers was to demonstrate that torpedo-boats are almost useless. As before discovering this fact the rulers of the Queen's navee built 136 torpedo-boats it may occur to the British taxpayer that for Britannia to rule the waves is chiefly profitable to shipbuilders and government contractors.

GETTING mad not only sours the disposition, but also the bodily secretions, and reacts unfavorably on the blood and nervous system. A peculiar poison has been separated from or found in the perspiration of angry or frightened persons, and their salivary fluid, if inoculated by a bite is dangerous. Keep cool and clean, lest you develop poisons that react as such on yourself. A fit of passion may be the immediate precursor of a three-weeks spell of inflammatory rheumatism.

AGAIN the familiar lines of school-boy declamation leap to the lip. "Come one, come all, this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I." Corbett defies the whole outfit. If the champion can really bag the entire heavy-weight and middle weight classes in one week, and so measurably reduce the noble army of sluggers, heaven smile upon the courage and prosper his herculean undertaking. But bad as Corbett's vocation is there is something exhilarating in this his latest and last challenge to the world at pugilism.

THAT every parasite is infested with minor parasites, like fleas and the proverbial bug, is illustrated again by the Russian thistle. The farmers' work for its extirpation will be ably assisted by a green worm less than an inch in length, which feeds on the weed and destroys it. Literally millions of these worms are found on a small area of the ground where the thistle grows and they exhaust its sap, when it withers. It is an annual plant, growing from the seed, so it does not come up again from the root next year. Wherever the seed falls and a new plant sprouts in the spring the worms will be present to attend to its case. The worm is said to attack no other vegetation.

SINCE the laws of nature have come to be better understood we do not hear so much about "mysterious dispensations of Providence" as we formerly did; but such terrific visitations as the recent tornado in Minnesota and Iowa seem to come in that category if anything does. They are calamities that fall without warning. They can be neither predicted nor resisted. Their work is done in a moment and they are gone, while their conduct is so eccentric as to forestall any attempt to escape them. Like death by lightning, they are fatal to only a small percentage of the total population; but, as no one can provide against being included in that percentage, they must be classed among the inevitable risks of life in the regions where they prevail.

SOME of the papers are chronicling as a new and wonderful surgical operation the supplying of a nasal organ to a patient in Charing Cross Hospital, London. The patient sacrificed one of his own fingers, which was half amputated and bound into the required position, where it grew so kindly that it was completely severed from the hand about four weeks after the first adhesion was effected. But is this new? Was not the so-called "Taliacotian operation" successfully performed fully fifty years ago on the other side of the Atlantic? And did not that consist in making a new nose out of a portion of the patient's arm, which was partly severed, so that the blood could circulate freely through the semi-detached portion while it was gaining the desired adhesion to the face? If memory be not at fault these questions may be answered in the affirmative.

THE historic Appomattox Court House Postoffice in Virginia has had its name changed by the postal authorities. The county seat was removed to another village three miles distant and carried the name Appomattox Court House with it. But this does not make any change necessary in the name of the postoffice except to drop the superfluous words "Court House," which are no longer fitting. The substitute name selected for the postoffice is "Surrender." Doubtless the man who devised the name thought it an improvement. It is really ambiguous, for the word "surrender" does not of itself tell who were victorious. "Appomattox tells the whole story. It is firmly stamped on the popular mind, and as Abraham Lincoln said of Gettysburg, "the world will never forget what was done there."

THE death of Prof. David Swing removes a conspicuous figure from the intellectual, religious and social world of Chicago. He was regarded by many as easily the foremost preacher in Chicago, and they showed their devotion to him for years by the most liberal pecuniary and personal support. He had a national reputation as a liberal thinker and writer. He was a representative of advanced theology; yet he had a method of dreamy expression in which he clothed his beliefs that the not too critical orthodox regarded as satisfactory, while it was accepted also by the radicals. He was an effective preacher of the gospel of grace, humanity, charity, and good will. All the influence of his teachings was for good. He knew no sectarian lines nor exclusive creeds. His religion was one of universal benevolence and toleration; he respected every sincere faith and loved every honest mind. Probably much that is contained in Pope's "Universal Prayer" came nearer to his confession of faith, if he had one, than any other articles of belief clothed in human language.

An Ominous Error.

The Tarsney family is somewhat noted in political life. There are three brothers, Adjutant General Tarsney of Colorado, who was recently tarred and feathered; Congressman Tarsney of Missouri, and Tim Tarsney, formerly a member from Michigan. The story is told of Tim that when sent at one time to a Connecticut city for a campaign speech he was introduced with even more than the usual flights of oratory. The chairman after dwelling upon his great deeds for the nation and telling how his name had become a household word throughout the land, leaned over and whispered: "What is your name, sir?" Upon receiving the answer, he continued: "I now have the most gratifying pleasure of introducing to you Congressman Larceny."

AN IMPORTANT RULING.

Employer Liable for Damages to Employe Injured by Another's Carelessness.

Two trains on the Erie Railroad, approaching each other from opposite directions, were both greatly behind time, and were running on special orders, from station to station, sent by the train dispatcher at Hornellsville. About as the day dispatcher was leaving and the night dispatcher was coming on, both trains were waiting at different stations for orders. The night dispatcher asked the retiring day dispatcher to give the orders, which was done.

At a later hour the night dispatcher, having forgotten the order sent by the day dispatcher at his request, directed one of the trains to proceed beyond a station where it was waiting to meet the other. The order was obeyed, a collision resulted, and the fireman was terribly hurt, losing both legs and suffering other injuries.

The old doctrine of law is that a master is not responsible for injuries caused to a servant through the negligence of a fellow servant. This is still held to be the law where the servants are of equal rank and neither is working under the orders of the other. If six men are handling a bar of railroad iron, and by the carelessness of one it falls and smashes the foot of another, the employer is not liable.

But in several States it has been held that—where the employes are not equal in rank, but one is working under the orders of another—if the inferior employe is injured through the negligence of the superior, the employer is liable. The superior employe represents the employer, and his act is the employer's act. The boss of a gang of hands is the "vice principal" of their common employer, to use a technical term in law.

In the Erie Railroad case the train dispatcher sent the order, signing the division superintendent's name over his own initials, according to the usage of the company. He represented the company, and was the superior of the fireman who was injured. His act was the company's act.

This decision derives additional interest from the fact that the opinion was written by Judge Rufus W. Peckham, who is regarded justly as one of the ablest and most enlightened jurists in the United States. He declared that the doctrine was not free from difficulty, especially in many cases in determining whether one employe is superior in authority to the other. But this he regarded as mainly a matter of fact to be settled by the jury. The principle was correct.

In some ten States of the Union the highest courts have held to this rule of law, and in one case it has been affirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States. In the case of a claim for damages against a Wisconsin railroad company a locomotive engineer, having been injured by following the orders of the conductor of the train—a superior employe—the federal Supreme Court gave final judgment against the railroad company.

In Illinois and other States there have been repeated efforts to procure legislation making employers liable in all cases for damages in case of injury to employes caused by the negligence of co-employes, even if of equal authority. But it has been thought that this was carrying the principle too far. Of course, if it should be embodied in a law it would apply to all employers alike, individuals and firms, as well as corporations.

The Price of a Wife.

In the earliest times of purchase a woman was bartered for useful goods or for services rendered to her father. In the latter way Jacob purchased Rachel and her sister Leah. This was a Beena marriage, where a man, as in Genesis, leaves his father and his mother and cleaves unto his wife and they become one flesh or kin—the woman's. The price of a bride in British Columbia and Vancouver Island varies from £20 to £40 worth of articles. In Oregon an Indian gives for a wife horses, blankets, or buffalo robe; in California shell money or horses; in Africa, cattle. A poor Damara will sell a daughter for one cow a richer Kafir expects from three to thirty. With the Banyai, if nothing be given, her family claim her children. In Uganda, where no marriage recently existed, she may be obtained for half a dozen needles, or a coat, or a pair of shoes. An ordinary price is a box of percussion caps. In other parts, a goat or a couple of buckskins will buy a girl. Passing to Asia, we find her price is sometimes five to fifty roupies, or at others, a carload of wood or hay. A princess may be purchase for 3,000 roubles. In Tartary, a woman can be obtained for a few pounds of butter, or where a rich man gives twenty small oxen a poor man may succeed with a pig. In Fija, her equivalent is a whale's tooth or a musket. These, and similar prices elsewhere, are eloquent testimony to the little value a savage sets on his wife.

Monkeys in the Rigging.

Among other persons and things which Capt. Rogers brought with him from Africa on the bark Liberia, which moored at the Empire Stores, foot of Main Street, Brooklyn, yesterday, was a number of monkeys of all shapes, sizes and ages. The captain went ashore to report, and on returning saw the monkeys he thought safely secured below in boxes up in the rigging, some grinning, some laughing, but many of them crying with cold.

They had been locked up all night sure enough, but had escaped through a broken pane, and there being no cocoanut tree in sight, climbed up the rigging and stays to take observations. The Liberian also brought snakes, pigeons, and boa constrictors in large numbers, and also many colored people the missionaries had induced to go out and settle in Liberia and help Christianize it, but who returned in disgust, saying that the country was no good. They had to work hard to support the converted who insisted upon loafing while as for money, they never saw a red cent in the colored republic.—New York Advertiser.

The Eccentric Passenger.

A grisly story was related yesterday by a guest at the Weddell House, who had just returned from a trip across the ocean. He was G. C. Kohler of Akron, who has spent the last months in Europe. Mr. Kohler returned last week, reaching New York by the Lloyd steamer Maasdam on Saturday. "It was on the return trip," he said, "and among the passengers was a man whose intellect had suffered impairment, and who was constantly watched by an attendant. It was his custom to sit at table, during meal time, and gaze at the ceiling for long periods, occasionally taking a mouthful of food. The last meal we took with him was marked by a circumstance which was far from being pleasant.

"The dinner was over and the ladies had left the table, a few gentlemen remaining to smoke and have a good time together. The strange passenger was at his usual recreation, evidently trying to look a hole in the ceiling. The enjoyment of the little party was long continued. The steward entered the room presently, and after waiting at one side a short time asked us if we were not ready to leave the saloon, as we had evidently finished our dinner. One of the party answered that so far as he knew we were willing to remain at the table for some time yet. 'Very well then,' said the steward, 'we will do what we came in to do.'

"He motioned to the door, and several men came in with a mattress, which was laid upon the floor. What did they do then but take hold of our friend of the disturbed intellect, and lift him out of his chair and lay him on the stretcher. They composed his limbs and covered his face and carried him out of the room, while we stood speechless. Then we discovered that he had died during the meal, sitting bolt upright in his chair, and as it had been thought that no one would notice the fact he had not been disturbed until the room was nearly empty. We did not continue our jollity any longer that day."—Cleveland Leader.

Saw His Error.

"I have just called, Miss Simpson," said the angry lover, "to say farewell, but before I say it I want you to know that I have discovered your falseness and I despise you for it."

"Why, Billy, what is the matter?"

"Oh, you know well enough. Maybe I didn't pass the gate last evening and see you with your head on another man's shoulder. Who is the unhappy man?"

"But, Billy, I haven't seen any man but you, dearest; honest I haven't."

"No, I suppose not. Then, maybe, I am blind, deaf and dumb, and an idiot. Maybe you didn't have company last evening?"

"No one, Billy, but my best friend, Emily. No, I didn't and I think you are a wretch."

"And you didn't stand at the gate?"

"Oh, yes, we did. We were counting the stars in the big dipper—making wishes on them."

"Oh, yes, I suppose I was blind. Now, maybe you'll describe Emily to me?"

"Why, she had on her Knox hat, her black blazer suit, a white shirtwaist, with a black satin tie, and a white duck vest. You know Emily, Billy."

Billy—"Um-m! I see."

And what might have been a modern tragedy was averted and Billy made up at once.—Indianapolis Sentinel.

When a Trout Is Hungry.

A curious incident, showing that trout will not be easily frightened from a hook when they are hungry, is told by a Maine sportsman. He felt a good bite, but before he could haul in the fish it broke loose and shot away. He readjusted his bait and made another cast. In a minute the hook was again taken, and he pulled in a two pound trout. It was hooked in the side of the mouth, while upon the other side a piece more than an inch long had been torn from the jaw, and the wound was still bleeding. This showed conclusively it was the same fish that had just taken the hook and had got away. The singular part was that a fish so badly wounded should bite a second time.—Bangor News.

Light Wood.

Light wood is one of the most useful Southern products, especially in Florida where it is used by all sorts of country folk, and particularly by the hunters. A cordwood stick carried into the wilderness will cut up into fragments with which a dozen meals may be cooked. The rich, resinous pine makes a quick hot fire, especially suited to open air cooking.

A NEW scrubbing machine is whirled over the floor like a lawn mower. It soaps, wets, rubs, and dries the floor, and two or three movements of the machine make the boards shine.

THE capitol at Washington, it is said, has cost the country $30,000,000 to build and keep in repair.

IN buying presents, give a girl something she can wear, and a boy something he can eat.

A WESTERN man never thinks he is doing well unless he has an offset to every bill he owes.

ALL ABOUT PENS.

They Were Not Made to Perfection Until 1820.

Sharp-pointed bodkins, made of bronze, of steel, or of iron, were the first pens, and they were used for cutting out letters and hieroglyphics in the limestone, sandstone or steatite of Eastern countries. Such pens were also used for writing on Assyrian tablets. The tablets were made of soft clay, and after receiving inscriptions were dried in the sun or baked in the fire.

In the far East and in Egypt the camel's hair pencil soon took the place of the metal bodkin. With the pencil letters were painted on the skins of animals and the back of trees in much the same manner that the Chinese draw them on paper at the present day.

In Persia, Greece, and Syria, wax and leaden tablets came into use, and the stylus became their popular pen. The stylus was made of bone, ivory or metal, with one end pointed and the other flattened. The flattened end was used to erase errors made in writing.

The use of parchment and papyrus, however, called for a more flexible pen than either the bodkin or the stylus, so reed pens were invented. For making these pens a peculiar kind of reed was used, which was shaped to a point and split, similar to the pens now in use.

In A. D. 553 it was discovered that quills made much better pens than reeds. The quills of the goose, the swan, and the crow were used principally. Several centuries later, when writing paper was introduced into England, the quill was still the favorite writing instrument. However, the quill pens had been greatly improved, and those from Russia and Holland were excellent.

In the early part of the present century there was a demand for something better and more durable than quill pens. Accordingly a great many experiments were made with horn, glass, tortoise shell and finally with steel, silver and gold. It was soon found that pens made of horn and tortoise shell soften under the action of the ink and were not so good as quill pens. Nor were the silver pens very good. They were too elastic and too easily worn at the points.

In 1803 steel was tried in Wise's "barrel" pens, but being poorly made and very expensive, they were not a success. At Birmingham, England, in 1820, the manufacture of steel pens began in earnest, and they proved to be excellent. The first gross of steel pens sold in Birmingham brought $30 at wholesale.

They were soon manufactured in great numbers, and have been getting better and cheaper all the time, until now we can buy for a trifle the best steel pen made. Europe has always excelled in the manufacture of steel pens, and America is noted for the manufacture of gold pens.—Philadelphia Times.

BUTTED EACH OTHER.

How Two Negroes in Slavery Days Tried to Settle a Trifling Dispute.

"One of the most novel conflicts I ever saw between two belligerents of the human race," said Milo Stafford, of New Orleans, to a writer for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, "took place between two negroes on my plantation a few years before the war. A dispute had arisen between them over the possession of an old pair of trousers, and they were just on the point of beginning hostilities when I arrived at a point where I could take in the scene without being observed by them. I suppose most people will call it brutal, but I determined to let them go ahead and pound one another for a while, thinking the matter might just as well be settled between them then and there, as I knew if I interfered they would have it out at some future time. I was not prepared, however, for the mode of warfare they selected. Immediately they clasped their arms around each other and began butting their heads together like a pair of sheep. That they were in dead earnest was evinced by the terrible force of the blows, which sounded as loud as a well-executed clap of the hands. There was no attempt at boxing, only butting, and so effectually was it performed that in a very short time the heads of both antagonists were covered with blood. After continuing the fight for about five minutes both broke away and sat down to rest and recover their breath preparatory to renewing the encounter, as neither signified his willingness to give up. Thinking that the affair had gone far enough I stepped from where I had been concealed and demanded that they patch up their differences in a more peaceable way, and warned them that if any renewal of hostilities occurred they would be summarily dealt with. This warning had the desired effect and half an hour later I saw them working side by side, chatting with each other cordially, as if their recent fight had no place even in their memories."

An Arkansas Custom.

It was on the Washita River, in Southern Arkansas. I had been told where to stop to secure information about a certain piece of land. I reached the place to find it a very dilapidated log cabin, and in front of it sat a long, lean man, who was so yellow in the face that I at first took him for a mulatto. He was stretching and yawning as I rode up, and he apologized for not getting up by saying:

"'Scuse me, stranger, but it's about time fur my chill."

"Much ague around here?"

"Heaps of it."

"Do you live here all alone?"

"Reckon not. The ole woman is in thar, but she's got a chill. Sal is my oldest, but she's chillin', too. Rube is beyond the mewl shed and he's got it bad today. Yo' kin see Danny out by the log heap, and maybe may be up on the roof. It's our chillin' day and everbody has got to chill."

I expressed my sympathy and began to ask after the land, but he held up a shaking finger and said:

"Stranger, don't know what the custom is elsewhere, but right 'round yere when a feller has a chill he make it his business to be chilly, and to 'tend to nothin' else out shakin'. 'Deed, it's all he kin 'tend to. Sorry to disapint yo', but from now to 4 o'clock I sha'l hev my ha'k agin this cabin and be shakin' all the chinkin' out from atween the logs. Come ba'k arter that and I'll talk to yo'."

I returned that evening and he cheerfully gave me all desired information, and when I rode away he called after me:

"Mighty sorry to hev put yo' to so much trouble, but we've got to foller custom, yo' know, when we're a chillin' but when the chill goes off and the fever comes on, then we drap all formalities and try to act nateral to everbody."—Free Press.

The Dog and the Breeches.

In the Sportsman's Annual it is recorded that a Suffolk gentleman being on an excursion with a friend, and having a Newfoundland dog also accompanying him, the animal soon became the subject of conversation, when his master told his friend that the dog would, upon receiving the order, return and bring any article left at any distance.

To confirm this assertion a marked shilling was put under a large stone by the roadside—having been previously shown to the dog. The two friends then rode for three miles, when the dog received his master's signal to return for the shilling he had seen put under the stone. The dog turned back, and the gentlemen reached home, but to their surprise and disappointment the hitherto faithful messenger did not return during the day.

It afterward appeared that he had gone to the place where the shilling was deposited; but the stone being too large for his strength to remove, he had stayed howling at the place till two horsemen, riding by, and attracted by his seeming distress, stopped to look at him; when one of them, alighting, removed the stone, and seeing the shilling put it into his pocket, not at the time knowing it to be the object of the dog's search. The dog followed their horses for twenty miles, remained undisturbed in the room where they supped, followed the chambermaid into the bedroom, and secreted himself under one of the beds.

The possessor of the shilling hung his breeches up by the bedside; but when the travelers were both asleep the dog took the garment in his mouth, and, leaping out of the window, which was left open on account of the sultry heat, reached the house of his master at 4 o'clock in the morning with the prize he had made free with, and in the pockets of which were found a watch and money, that were returned upon being advertised, when the whole mystery was unraveled, to the admiration of them all.

The Boy Had Nerve.

Dr. McTavish of Edinburgh, was something of a ventriloquist, and it befell that he wanted a lad to assist in the surgery who must necessarily be of strong nerves.

He received several applications, and when telling a lad what the duties were, in order to test his nerves, he would say, while pointing to a grinning skeleton standing upright in a corner:

"Part of your work would be to feed the skeleton there, and while you are here you may as well try to do so."

A few lads would consent to a trial and receive a basin of hot gruel and a spoon. While they were pouring the hot mess into the skull, the doctor would throw his voice so as to make it appear to proceed from the jaws of the bony customer, and gurgle out:

"Br-r gr-uh, that's hot!"

This was too much, and without exception the lads dropped the basin and bolted, says a writer in Tid-Bits. The doctor began to despair of ever getting a suitable helpmate until a small boy came and was given the gruel and spoon. After the first spoonful the skeleton appeared to say

"Br-r gr-uh, that's hot!" Shovelling in the scalding gruel as fast as ever, the lad rapped the skull and impatiently retorted:

"Well, blow it, can't yer, yer ould bony?"

The doctor sat down in his chair and fairly roared, but when he came to he engaged the lad on the spot.

Serious.

Few things vex a physician more than to be sent for in great haste at an unseasonable hour, only to find upon arrival that little or nothing is the matter with the patient.

An eminent English surgeon was called to an "urgent case" of this sort, and found the patient, who was a man of great wealth but small courage, had received a very slight wound from a fall.

The surgeon's face did not betray his irritation, but he gave his servant orders to go home with all possible haste, and return with a certain plaster. The patient, turning very pale, said anxiously:

"I trust, sir, there is no great and immediate danger?"

"Indeed there is," answered the surgeon. "Why, if that fellow doesn't run like a race-horse, there's no telling but your wound will heal before he gets back with the plaster!"

THE largest family in the world is that of the King of Siam. His majesty has two official wives, eighty-eight wives of minor order and seventy-two children.