

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

Life is too short for long engagements.

Every summer resort has its own ideas of style.

Some men haven't energy enough to stop work long enough to rest.

China ceded Formosa, but Japan is experiencing difficulty in reaping the harvest.

The Boston authorities have decided that hereafter not a sparrer shall fall without their knowledge.

"What is there to live for?" asks the Toledo Blade. Well, let's get even with the coffin trust for a while.

St. Louis keeps right along at about one-third of the population of Chicago, but is crawling up to New York slowly but surely.

There is plenty of silver in the Denver mint, but \$80,000 worth of gold is missing, and in its stead are traces of a little steel.

A Philadelphia policeman who shot a 10-year-old boy offers as an excuse the plea of self-defense. Perhaps the boy attacked the officer with cigarettes.

A New York man who eats five pounds of steak, twenty eggs and drinks twelve cups of coffee at a meal ought to take something for his appetite.

An amateur poet who sent in a bit of doggerel the other day referred to the editor's "wickerwork receptacle." It is perhaps needless to say that he struck it the first time trying.

In spite of the pertinent query of Miss Willard, "Why can't men be beautiful?" Chauncey M. Depew is reported to be entertaining the idea that he has sufficient attractions to overcome the "new woman."

The joint entry of the French and Russian squadrons into the harbor at Kiel may or may not have significance, but the sight was not pleasant to the eyes of the young war lord who regards the great German empire as his personal property.

A man in Hackensack, N. J., recently bought a neighbor's wife for \$50, payable in monthly installments of \$6. We don't know whether he struck a good bargain or not, as we have lost track of the regular Jersey list prices for such goods, but it strikes us that \$1.50 a week is pretty high.

The sugar trust has joined the other trusts in marking up the necessities of life. Its excuse is that the consumption of sugar is about to be increased by a very large fruit crop. "All the traffic will bear," is the business motto of all the trusts, and they apply it in anticipation of future demands.

The adoption of a system of phonetic spelling is a reform that will come slowly, if at all. Many years would be required to teach people that the new method was not simply bad spelling; and until they could be got out of the opinion that it had its inspiration in *nicotinic* instead of choice, they would ridicule the writer and the practice.

A Minnesota hotel advertiser, "Fine porcelain bathtubs free to commercial men." This hotel deserves to live in history as the first establishment of its kind on earth which was ever known to give anything free to commercial travelers. It reminds the Commercial Traveler of what Gen. Sherman said about St. Louis hotels during the war: "Rates, four dollars per day; board and lodging extra."

A pair of St. Louis lovers, tired of life, though apparently not of each other, committed suicide by taking poison, cutting both their throats, and shocking each other through the heart. A little more ingenuity might have arranged it so that the bodies would then have rolled into the water. They expended a great amount of surplus energy, however, as it was quite enough to have served a quartet more of foolish people.

Queen Victoria is reported to have a private fortune of \$175,000,000. Statisticians with a taste for easy arithmetic and tough propositions have figured it out that if a man could live and work and save \$500 a year right along he could accumulate a fortune of the same size in 350,000 years. No candidates for a job of that length have appeared, and there is no disputing the fact that the queen business is a pretty good business after all.

If the coming woman is really taking to the higher education in good cooking, as is reported of her, then all will be forgiven. Even political economy and sociological problems will bear pleasant family discussion over a table containing a well-cooked dinner. Perhaps therein lies the hint of feminine final supremacy, for what can man refuse the being who makes an art of pleasing his palate and delighting his digestion? Surely that's most yield as a supreme attribute to the staying power of this new and subtle force.

The word "bike" is a source of division to many of the Boston papers. They want to eliminate it, but they would

be wise to attune their senses to it with what speed they may. "Bike" is not beautiful, but it is short, expressive, and unique. It certainly strikes the ear as pleasantly as "dude," that was accepted after protest as "mugwump" or as "bulldoze." "Wheel" would do, but the bicycle, as its name declares, has two wheels, while "cycle" has another use and meaning. This is a busy world, and the rider who has learned to say "bike" will not unlearn it, even to oblige the distinguished purists of the East.

It is telegraphed from Washington that the fusty halls of Congress are undergoing extensive alterations and improvements. Thousands of electric lamps are to be put in, that each night session may glitter like a ballroom and all the statesmen be kept awake instead of sleeping comfortably, as they would prefer. New furniture is to be provided; the ventilation is to be improved; and altogether the staid congressional rooms are to be rehabilitated into cleanliness and an air of luxurious presentability. Good. Now all that is necessary is that the new Congress should renovate and improve the congressional statesmanship to match the furnishings.

Miss Martha Wilson, of Mount Vernon, N. Y., died recently, and her heirs have now discovered that between her 87th and 90th years she spent \$500,000 of which she was left in control by her sister. Up to her 87th year she was very penurious because she had little money. When her ship came in, however, she squandered money right and left. As a landlady she was ideal, it being her habit every now and then to send the tenants receipts for bills for their rent, flowers on Easter Sunday, lavish gifts on Christmas, and at other times checks for handsome amounts. Occasionally she would give a house to a friend. In this way the good old lady managed to squander the \$500,000 in three years. The Wilson heirs are now trying to get hold of the scattered estate, but they will not have half as much fun as the old lady had in spending it.

Probably too much attention is being paid to the vexed bloomer controversy, but this does not mean that the controversy is not likely to continue. It will go on until either the costume changes or the popular point of view changes, so that, from growing familiarity, the bifurcated thing no longer seems strange. Whatever the outcome, the bloomer discussion is here to stay. Note the recent flurry in Canada, when a member of a board of education tried to prevent school teachers from wearing the new costume. Note a similar effort to abolish the bloomer by calling it an article of "male attire." Note also that these efforts have failed lamentably. While the wordy rumpus continues the new bicycle costume, advancing firmly and boldly on its two legs, is working its way into public toleration. The accusation that the new garment is "male attire" may be parried now by calling attention to the fact that as it is already worn by women as much as men, it is no more man's attire than it is woman's. To cap the climax, there comes an edict of the west park board of Chicago prohibiting racing wheelmen from wearing their minger racing suits. This last looks like an insidious flank attack of the advocates of bloomers. Can it be that the new woman, having appropriated male attire for herself, means to drive the new man into petticoats and stays?

Though it is a sad fact that Mark Twain is bankrupt there still remains the glory of drawing the obvious moral of his downfall. He was a great and popular humorist and his nimble wit still insures him a salary that millions of men would covet. In the heyday of his success he was literally coining money. Everything that he wrote for the magazines brought a high price and his books ran through edition after edition, netting half a dozen average fortunes without the author incurring a risk or responsibility. Of course the publishers were also reaping a golden harvest and Twain thought to divert this into his own exchequer by establishing a publishing house of his own. With two or three partners he launched into the enterprise and the event shows that he had less financial ability than that character of his own creation, Pudd'n-head Wilson, who was philosopher enough to say, "Put all your eggs in one basket and watch that basket." Mark Twain's house first published the Grant memoirs. They had a sale so enormous that Mrs. Grant alone realized a quarter of a million as her share. Of course the profit of the publishers must have netted them a fortune, yet that, in addition to \$70,000 advanced by Mark Twain's wife, was lost in future ventures. He can yet make an easy living, but the days of his great opportunities are probably past. He was a success in the literary field and should have been content to remain there pursuant to the old adage that admonishes the shoemaker to stick to his last. Twain is no business man. He was without experience and had no opportunity to develop any latent executive ability he might have possessed. He was making money fast enough to satisfy even an unreasonable man, and yet with a greed scarcely consistent with humor, he wanted it all. He abandoned his "forte," and declined to act upon his own good advice—leave well enough alone.

Not Interested. Starting from her sleep, she seized her husband convulsively by the nose and one eye-lid.

"John," she cried, "there's a burglar going through your trousers!"

"What do you wake me for?" irritably demanded the head of the household.

"You're between my trousers!"—*De Witt Tribune.*



Reversing an Old Saw.

A wide tire ordinance failed to pass the City Council of Minneapolis. One of the arguments used against it was that it would be too expensive for business houses using truck wagons to equip them all with tires to come within the limits of the ordinance. This is evidently on the theory that a pound of cure is worth more than an ounce of prevention. In other words, these business men would rather pay a pound of increased taxes for repairing paved streets than an ounce of expense to have paved streets that do not need repairing.

Another point claimed was that it would also be a hardship on the farmers in the vicinity. This shows how much Minneapolis aldermen know about the cost of wide tires on farm wagons. Or if they are posted, they must have strange ideas of what constitutes a hardship. Five dollars, at the outside, will cover the additional cost of a farm wagon with three-inch tires, and if wide tires were adopted by all the farmers in the vicinity of Minneapolis each farmer would save ten times that amount in the first year.

Are the aldermen of Minneapolis still voting for Andy Jackson?—*Farm Implement News.*

Women and Good Roads.

Ten years ago no one dreamed that the time would ever come when women would be directly interested concerning the condition of the public thoroughfares. But the bicycle which is responsible for such a general stirring up of old conclusions has really set them to thinking on this very topic. And when a woman thinks she's very likely to act, just one weak little woman's momentary impulse will often result in more real purpose being accomplished than will a three days' convention of wise old professors whose excessive prudence is a positive prohibition to progress.

It is said that twenty pretty bicycle girls of East Lynn, disgusted by the disgraceful condition of the public roads in those parts, determined recently to institute a radical reform. The turned out in full force with picks, shovels and rollers, and repaired the worst of the road. When the bloomer beauties finished their week's work they pointed with pride to several miles of road which they had made fit for wheeling.

In Cincinnati recently one hundred women armed with brooms, hoes, wheelbarrows and shovels began early one morning to clean the streets. From early in the morning until sunset the women toiled and one of the principal streets of the city was cleaned as bright as a new dish pan. Whenever a street cleaning official came along that way he was loudly blessed. It was an object lesson which it would seem can hardly fail to have its effect.

If the women of this broad land earnestly take up the matter of good roads and clean streets something definite and immediate will be the result, because woman is a determined creature and "if she will do it, she will; and there's an end on't."

BLEEDING THE GRANGER.

Description of the Operations of Quacks Traveling in the West.

The most contemptible individual known to modern society is the traveling quack doctor. He abounds everywhere. His victims are confined to no class. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant are alike susceptible to his promises and persuasions. He works in different ways. Sometimes he charts a column in the city papers, in which he tells of his wonderful exploits in medicine. He inserts a picture of himself, which is sufficient evidence in itself that he is a man of no ability and less character. He describes himself as the renowned and eminent Dr. Bangs from the Imperial symposium of medicine at London, New York and Chicago. He comes by request of his innumerable patients throughout the Northwest. Consultation free. The other specimen of this perennial barnacle comes without blare of trumpets. He steals into a community with his advertising material. He inquires who is sick and makes a personal canvass. Sometimes he employs some member of the community more contemptible than himself to go with him and introduce him and recommend him. He finds some individual suffering from one of the many ills that beset us all and tells of the great number of cases of this kind that have been cured by him, and that notwithstanding the case has baffled the skill of the local physicians it is a very simple case for him, and if he doesn't cure he will ask no pay. People who are afflicted with disease are ready to respond to any proposition that will relieve the weary, oppressed body. Fifty or \$100 they consider a slight remuneration to a man with skill sufficient to effect a cure and they readily sign a note for that amount or more. The promise of "no cure no pay" is not incorporated in the note and the eminent doctor, as soon as he secures the note, considers his work ended.

A couple of cases of this kind have recently come to the notice of the writer. A certain eminent physician by the

name of A. H. Warren, hailing from Des Moines or Shenandoah or some place down that way, made a tour of this county about a year ago. The curing of the most obstinate ills was a matter of pastime to him. He stopped at the home of August Kolb in Badger township and made an agreement with him to cure his wife, who was suffering from some chronic trouble. It is unnecessary to say he promised a cure. He took Mr. Kolb's note for \$100 and left with Mr. Kolb a printed slip on which was printed the words "the cure not guaranteed." Mr. Kolb paid no attention to the slip and read it for the first time when the note became due. He supposed it was the contract of "no cure, no pay," when it was just the opposite. This professional pirate sold the note of course to the German Savings Bank of Des Moines. Mrs. Kolb was not benefited a particle. The note became due on April 1 and it was paid. Frank Black, of Cooper township, gave his note for \$50 to the same party. It was sold to the same bank and was paid, and Mr. Black received no benefit from the transaction. Mr. Black says that there was a whole string of names of the responsible farmers of Webster County on the doctor's patient list, and as people who permit themselves to be swindled in this way may never like to tell about it, it will never be known, probably, how much the eminent Dr. Warren stole from the afflicted people of this and surrounding counties.—*Fort Dodge Post.*

Working a New Dodge.

"Excuse me, madame, but you are mistaken. It was only a quarter that you gave me."

"I tell you it was not. It was a 50-cent piece, and I insist on having the proper change."

"Well, madam, I will send up to the cashier's desk and verify my statement."

"Very well, I will wait."

A penciled note traveled over the trolley, and presently returned with the endorsement:

"The coin was 25 cents."

"I believe that you took my 50 cents and put a quarter in place of it," said the well-dressed customer, who had bought some trifle at the pins and needle counter.

The young woman behind the counter flushed, and replied indignantly:

"That is not true, and you know it is not! You gave me a quarter of a dollar."

"You are impudent as well as dishonest," responded the customer. "I shall address a complaint to the management on the subject."

The young woman behind the counter turned wearily to another person who was awaiting attention. Said the latter:

"I hope that she will not make trouble for you."

"I guess not," was the reply. "She was only bluffing."

"But she thought that she did not get her right change."

"Oh, no! I don't believe that she thought anything of the kind."

"You do not mean, surely, that she was intentionally making a dishonest claim?"

"Yes, I do."

"Why?"

"It is a little dodge that is tried quite frequently. We caught a customer at it the other day—just set a little trap for her and sprung it."

"Did you have her arrested?"

"Oh, no! It does not pay the management of a dry goods shop to have people arrested, even if they should go so far as to steal things. We simply told her that her patronage was no longer desired."

MARKED MONEY.

Curious Mania for Writing Sententious Sentiments on Bank Notes.

A mania for advertising and putting strange communications on the back of the paper money of the Government has broken out. As a general thing torn bills are used, as that gives the man with the mania an excuse for his work, for he uses the slip with which the pieces are put together for his purpose. On a bill that came into the hands of one man on Dearborn street was a slip on which was printed "Shake the bottle." When he turned it into the bank the receiving man, whose quick eye caught it, asked: "Did you bring the bottle with you?"

On a \$5 bill handed over a bar on Monroe street was a slip on which was this:

"Touch not, taste not, handle not."

A Dearborn street bank took in a \$500 bill not long ago on the back of which was pasted a slip that had printed on it the ten commandments.

A cashier in a mercantile house on Randolph street has a bill of \$2 denomination on which is a slip, and on the slip is written in a woman's chirography an offer of marriage. The writer puts it thus: "I give up my last money on this. I send it out into the world, hoping it may return to me with a good man who will love me and take care of me." But no address accompanies the offer.

A bill is in a frame in an express office. There is a hole in the bill, and a note explains that the hole was made by a bullet fired by a train robber. The bill was in the side pocket of the express messenger.

A bill handed in at a cigar store on Madison street had this on the back:

"Don't come back to me until you can bring your silver brother with you."

A physician in the Venetian building has a private mark on a \$5 bill which he sent about several years ago. It comes back to him about twice a year.

A wholesale merchant over on Adams street was in China and Japan a few years ago. He gave a Japanese functionary a \$5 bill as a souvenir, placing on the same private mark. About three weeks ago it came into his possession again. He is confident that he is not mistaken in the mark, and does not feel complimented over the idea that his Japanese acquaintance did not think enough of him to keep the bill.

A business man of this city relates this: He went from Chicago to Pittsburgh on a sleeper. He paid the conductor for his berth, giving him a marked \$5 bill. He went from Pittsburgh to Cleveland the second day, and on the third day he bought a sleeping car ticket for his return trip. The conductor handed him the same bill he had given to the other conductor.

There is a bill floating about the country somewhere on the back of which is a prescription written by a reputable physician several years ago. It is a "sure cure" for the grip and was put there by the doctor out of a fancy that it might save somebody's life.

Another one is in circulation, presumably, on which is written: "If this should fall into the hands of Reuben Middleman he will please communicate his address to his brother James, General Delivery, Boston, Mass., on or before January, 1896. After that in England. He knows where."—*Chicago Tribune.*

Was Willing to Work.

The tramp was very humble when he asked for something to eat.

"Please, mum," he said, "I'm starvin'. Won't you give a poor feller as has lost all his family a bite to eat?"

But there was something odd and suspicious in her manner. She was inclined to doubt his honesty from the start.

"Want pie, I s'pose," she said sharply.

"No, mum," he answered meekly. "I'm afeared pie'd be too rich fer me now."

"Doughnuts, mebbe," she suggested.

"No, mum," he replied. "Doughnuts is all right, but I ain't expectin' 'em. A poor lone man that's down on his luck can't afford to be partickler. Some cold victuals that's left over'll do a hungry man plenty good enough. Ain't you got a little stale bread that the dog don't want?"

"Poor man," she said, considerably mollified. "I believe you really are hungry."

"Yes, mum—starvin', regularly starvin'."

Then she tried the last test of sincerity.

"See here!" she said. "A man that's real hungry will work to get something to eat."

"I'll work," he replied promptly. "I'm a workin' man. I've worked fer the city. Give me suthin' to eat an' I'll work fer you."

"I'll try you," she exclaimed; and then, after he had eaten enough for two men she said:

"No, mum," he returned apologetically.

so alarmingly high as to seriously affect the commercial prosperity of the city. Some time ago the Brazilian Government took in hand the question of removing their capital and appointed a scientific commission to fix a site, says the Pittsburgh Dispatch.

The commission have selected a plateau which should be a real land of promise to the transmigrants from the coast. The spot is between the parallels of 15 degrees 40 minutes and 16 degrees 8 seconds south, and the meridians of 49 degrees 30 minutes and 51 degrees west. It is over 4,000 feet above the level of the sea, and its temperature resembles that of middle France. There is plenty of water for agriculture and no yellow fever. The journey by rail from the coast is a matter of some eighteen hours. This is believed to be the first occasion on record in which science has been called in to choose the site of a capital.

He Had a Snoring-Room.

"I'm only a smooth-water sailor," the late millionaire horseman, John A. Morris, used to say. He had his yacht, the *Cora*, named for his wife, built for the shallow waters around New Orleans, and found it almost totally unfit for the rougher element here. Its cabins were like the rooms in a house, and all its furnishings and equipments were stumptuous. It was slow and rolling, says a writer in the New York Times, but was good enough to go to the races in. When in command of the deck Mr. Morris made it a rule to concede the right of way to every craft he met. "These people are working," he would say, "while I am only out for fun. It is my business to give way to them." But, with his customary shrewdness, he had another reason, which he never mentioned: "By getting out of the way of these people I make them my friends. If anything were to happen—if the *Cora* were to run down a vessel by any chance, these people would not make much of a fuss about it. They all know me and my boat, and never give way, because they know I shall do it." He snored like a bull. On the deck of the yacht he built a snoring room, where he could bellow and snort without disturbing his guests. The boat was stocked with the finest wines and liquors, cordials, etc., but they were for his friends. He never touched them. He was the finest carrier I ever knew. He used the most wonderful knife, and never was known to miss a joint. When the *Cora* was at New Orleans Mr. Morris turned it over to his young friends. Every day some young lady would receive a note to the effect that the yacht was hers the next day, and as many of her friends as she cared to invite.

Statistics of Duels in Italy.

Duel statistics, gruesome though they are, are interesting reading. An Italian "man of figures" has taken the trouble to ascertain to what extent his country has contributed, during the last ten years, toward the increase in the army of duellists. The following figures are the result of his researches: "From 1884 to 1894 no less than 947 duels were fought in Italy over newspaper controversies, 730 by rival lovers, 377 over political questions, 289 for insults, 183 for private reasons, and 19 over gambling quarrels. In 79 cases the cause of the duel was unknown. Journalists and officers in Italy are first among duellists. Of the 538 duels fought in 1884, 156 were fought by journalists and 105 by officers in the army. Of dueling lawyers there were 64; students 63; professors 22; deputies 14; engineers and architects 13; servants 6; and bankers 2.

How Sumner Evaded a Question.

When the Prince De Joinville was at Bathurst many years ago he was received by the Royal African Corps, black troops offered by white men. He attended a dinner party, wherein mulattoes appeared in full evening dress, low bodices, lace handkerchiefs, and fans. Afterward, dining at Washington with Charles Sumner, the great abolitionist, the Prince amused himself by telling about his Bathurst dinner, and asked Sumner whether he had ever given his arm to a negress. The Prince awaited his answer with some curiosity, to see whether he would dare answer in the affirmative before the American ladies, who were quite sensitive on the color question, but he got out of it very adroitly. "My dear Prince," said he, "in every religion each man has his own share of work, I preach and you practice. Don't let us mix the two things up together."

Sit Up Straight on Your Bicycle.

There is absolutely no reason for stooping over the handles in either of the two ways so commonly seen—and there is no excuse for so doing—in ordinary road riding. It may be necessary for the "scorcher" to assume the one or the other of these attitudes—to sprawl with the body straight but almost horizontal, and the head close to the handle bar, or to bend the upper part of the back as if trying to break it in the middle, and throw the shoulders forward as if desiring to make them meet across the breast. Even so—one who is not "scorching" does not need to make himself a hideous object to look at, and also to reduce the benefits of wheeling to a minimum, so far as its effects on the chest capacity is concerned.—*Scribner.*

Many Car Fenders Patented.

The patent office is at present issuing car-fender patents at the rate of seven a week. One of the latest is in the form of a horizontal circular brush made to revolve rapidly when the car is in motion by means of gearing from the axle. The brush is a trifle greater in diameter than the width of the track, and is supposed to brush the victim out of the way of the wheels.

As soon as a woman gets a lot of new clothes, she discovers that she is loathsome.

Work is the enemy of discontent.