TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

W. C. P. Breckinridge says he is "out of politics for good"—that is, for the good of politics, of course.

The vegetarians who slaughtered the missionaries in China must have been living on a cucumber diet.

If the men want the bloomer costume to come into general use it would be good policy not to stare at the pioneers.

Cuban patriots have formed a provisional government. That is better; they were beginning to run short of provisions.

A scientific exchange predicts that "we will be able to fly one of these days." That depends very largely, we are told, on our earthly behavior.

The agricultural colleges will have to hump themselves if they turn out enough farmers to support the lawyers, doctors and preachers turned out by the other colleges.

A young woman entered an Indianapolis bank and offered not to cut her throat for $50,000. Before the deal could be closed she grew impatient and left, and thus the bank lost a bargain.

"Do not let others kiss you indiscriminately," says the Boston Herald. No, indeed. We are bound to exercise some care in this matter, even though we make swarms of people angry. We're got to do it.

A Xenia, Ohio, paper says that the charge that the postmaster at that place paid $500 for his office ought to be investigated. We should say so. It is important to find out who has been cutting rates like that.

Zella Nicholaus says she will make her debut on the stage early next month. We warn her that theatrical life has many severe temptations for a pure, innocent and unsophisticated girl. She will find behind the footlights that "all is not Gould that glitters."

A recent compilation of New England vital statistics shows that in 1892 twenty-one marriages in every thousand of population occurred in the towns of more than 10,000 population, while in the villages and in the country the marriage rate was five less in the thousand. The city birth rate is higher in about the same proportion, but the death rate is also higher. The statistics indicate that while the chances of sufficient food are better in the cities, the chances of prolonged life are better in the country in spite of short rations.

The street car spotter has practically disappeared from some Western cities, where just lately a scheme of selling tickets for 25 cents good for six rides (there should also be sold thirty tickets for $1), has come into general use. The conductor punches a hole in the ticket for each ride. The spotter cannot, of course, tell which passengers have paid cash fares and which have trip cards, and so his usefulness has gone and he is going himself. The Rock Island Railroad recently adopted a seemingly excellent plan on its local trains running out of Chicago. The conductors were informed that spotters would not in the future be employed on the road and that the money thus saved would be applied to an increase in the wages of conductors. The conductors would not in future be watched, but would be regarded as trusted employes and paid as such. The plan is said to work to the satisfaction of both company and men.

The launch of the big steamship Zenith City from the South Chicago shipyards shows more than an advance in ship-building. The time has passed when a wooden vessel with the capacity of 1,000 tons is profitable. Cheap rail rates have done much toward building up these great lake barges. Each advance in the capacity of steamers has increased the trip profits, and as the fleet grew in carrying capacity the railroads have scaled down the tariff and run their trains on a faster schedule. The competition brought the whaleback barges, and now these ungainly boats push their stubby noses into the chief harbors along the chain of lakes. But they are not propellers, and are dependent on a tow-line and fair weather. The Zenith City in point of carrying capacity approaches the ocean liners, for in the hold is room for some six thousand tons dead weight. The owners can compete with the railroad companies and cut on the present rates with profit. These shipbuilders are working on business principles. They are building more large vessels, and the time is not far distant when the old wooden boats will be relegated to the lumber trade or left to decay in the docks.

Bicyclists cannot by any possible degree of propulsion knock over an ice cart, or even to a great extent disable an ordinary vehicle. They may run down the casual pedestrian, though even then they incur danger, but when it comes to colliding with a dog cart or a buggy the latter is pretty sure to have the best of it. So a Chicago "scorcher" found to his great confusion the other night. Riding along Jackson boulevard at a pace of twenty or twenty-five miles an hour, to the discomfiture and terror of many pedestrians, he suddenly found himself impaled—literally impaled—on the shaft of a buggy. He also had a couple of his ribs fractured, and generally was pretty badly used up. Of course if this disaster had happened to the other fellow, the "scorcher" would have gone cheerily on his way, possibly lamenting that anybody should be so foolish as to get in the way of his swift-revolving wheel, at the same time securing his personal safety by flight. Unhappily for him it was his own ox, or rather person, that was gored, and he may now have occasion, while in the hospital, to reflect upon the evils of "scorching." The chances are that hereafter he will not ride so fast. It is in truth a silly as well as a most dangerous practice. It is full of peril both to rider and pedestrian, and many serious accidents, even to the loss of life, have resulted from it. Perhaps a few notable disasters to the riders, such as this is, may ultimately check the "scorching" habit, which is probably as objectionable to sensible bicyclers as it is to everybody else.

Style is one of the few desirable things that money can not buy (says the New York Tribune). A first-class dressmaker may dress a woman artistically, but she can not give her style. Style does not mean variety of apparel; it does not even mean richness of material. It is in the poise of the head and shoulders, the habitual way of moving, that the indescribable quality of personal style lies secreted. If the average woman of to-day were asked what good gift she would choose as a boon from a fairy godmother, provided she could have but one, there is no doubt but that she would, on mature consideration, select style. Style outlives youth and good looks. It gives a woman an immense power of holding her own, and carries off awkward predicaments. It makes its possessor, in the long run, often outshine a commonplace beauty, no matter how plain she may be individually. Style frequently renders a woman presentable in a shabby gown, and is a gift that holds good for rain or shine, in hot or cold weather alike—one that, once possessed, never deserts its possessor. The fundamental principle of style is to wear an old gown with the air of a princess and to wear a new one as if you had forgotten its newness.

Scientists who are hired for that very purpose have certified again and again, with wearisome iteration, as to the complete harmlessness, and in some instances to the healthful quality of those electric shocks which startled individuals so frequently receive through the trolley wire agency. Some of the certificates of the trolley attorneys must be held responsible for a rather common impression that the capitalists who have equipped trolley roads are really public benefactors, and that not the least of their beneficence is that which provides the wayfaring man or the wandering horse or cow with delightful surprises in the shape of gratuitous electrical treatment. Once in a while, however, an unfortunate human being, who, up to the time of the wire contact, is supposed to be in admirable health, persists in dying from the shock. This was so when Miss Kate Valentine, of Norwalk, Conn., a robust 16-year-old girl, touched a telephone wire which had crossed a trolley wire. The telephone wire was lying in the grass and was practically invisible to the casual pedestrian. The remains of Miss Valentine were buried. We expect the appearance of lengthy papers on electricity, in which men of great learning will prove by every theory known to humanity how utterly impossible it is for the trolley current to seriously damage the physical organism of any man, woman or child who is not already at death's door.

A recent telegram from Kansas City stated that the microscopic department of the Bureau of Animal Industry has been suspended by the Secretary of Agriculture, and 300 women, each drawing $50 per month, have been thrown out of employment. The suspension is reported to have been decided on because the packing companies have no orders for pork from countries requiring microscopic inspection, and the Government does not propose to furnish such inspection for those who do not require it. This is perfectly right. The fact is that American pork is and has been more free from trichina than German or French pork, while Germany and France are the countries from which most of the objections and complaints have come. But those objections were mere pretexts, invented with the object of excluding American meat for the pecuniary benefit of German and French hog raisers. This is all there was to the outcry. American pork does not hurt American consumers by reason of alleged trichina or otherwise, and it does not injure the many Germans and French who have migrated to this country and eat as much of our pork as they can afford to buy. The people of the British Islands take most of our pork exports, and they do not require a certificate of inspection to go with the article, nor do they ever report deaths from trichina contained in American pork. They will take just as much without inspection as with it, and it is understood but little if any of the meat they have taken in recent years has been passed under the microscope. The examinations have been conducted at a large expense in the hope of overcoming the objections raised by French and Germans to the introduction of our pork, and the measure has failed because the objections raised were vexatious ones, simply intended to conceal the real motive. So the inspection of our pork under the microscope is of no use. Probably it does not help the export trade one particle, and certainly no good has been gained commensurate with the trouble and cost of the operation.

The man with a keen nose never loses a cent.

THE FARM AND HOME.

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO FARMER AND HOUSEWIFE.

More Independence Possible in the Farmer's Life than in Any Other Occupation—Every Farm Should Have a Workshop—Art of Stack Making.

Bright Side of Farm Life.

That the average farmer's life is not exactly a bed of roses few will deny. But that it has its bright side is not to be disputed. Among the advantages held by the farmer over any other laboring class may be mentioned his independence. With his comfortable dwelling, well-filled barns and cellars, the modern farmer is absolutely the most independent of human beings. Financial questions which the nation may be worrying itself about affect him but little. Labor strikes, which involve thousands of dollars and nearly all classes of men, pass him by unheeded.

It is impossible to find another business or profession which is less dependent upon the patronage or favor of others, says the Denver Field and Farm. He knows that if he raises more of any kind of produce than he requires for his own use, he will be able to dispose of it, because his produce are the necessities of life. In place of being dependent upon others, he has the satisfaction of knowing that the whole world is dependent upon him. This independence is shown in many forms. He is not compelled, as many others are, to rise at a certain hour and labor a certain number of hours each day under the directions of others until he becomes simply a piece of machinery, without thought or feeling of his own. But, instead, his work is performed as he thinks best, and at whatever time he may consider most suitable.

Neither is he worried by the fear of losing his situation, as many a one who is employed by others is bound to be at one time or another. His position is secure, and he knows that with a fair season his recompense is assured. Looking at the bright side of farm life from another standpoint: No one ever passed a fine farm in midsummer and did not envy its owner. The picturesque surroundings, the well-kept fields and pastures, the fine horses and sleek cattle, the general air of peace and prosperity which hovers over a well-appointed farm. At this season, however, inspired poets have caused many men in other walks of life to become farmers, and many of the wrecks along the country roadside were caused by men who had better have remained in other walks of life.

The Farm Workshop.

Every farm ought to have a workshop on it. If not a separate building, at least a room where a supply of tools most commonly used are kept for use in cases of emergency. There are times, says Farm News, when a saw and a brace and set of bits will save a trip to town and a loss of time when time is valuable. A portable forge and an anvil, with a few blacksmith tools, will be used very frequently, and a shoemaker's outfit comes handy when there is a break in the harness or a call for a stitch or two in shoes or straps.

A neat little kit of shoemaker's tools can be purchased for $2 and a very convenient blacksmithing outfit for about $15, and a few dollars more spent for planes, chisels, files, saw, augers, squares and such common tools will pay a large interest in a way that is quite astonishing.

Many times a small break is neglected, until a serious one results from it, when if tools had been handy, the matter could have been attended to at the proper time. With the number of tools and implements that are now necessary on every well-conducted farm, there are frequent calls for repairing, and in a majority of the cases the farmer can make all necessary repairs himself, if he has the tools to work with.

Rods that get bent can be straightened, plows sharpened, and the thousand and one things that make a trip to the blacksmith or carpenter or wagonmaker necessary, and adds to the expense account, may be easily avoided by making a small outlay for tools. All these things count in a year, and the saving is worth looking after.

The Art of Stack Making.

American farmers have never been good stackers. The grain is put in barns, instead of being stacked as it usually is in Europe. At present the difficulty in making a good stack is greater than ever. Threshing machines that will put through 1,200 or more bushels of grain per day require all the help that can be got to get the grain in the straw to the machine. Only enough are left on the stack to get the straw out of the way. To make a really good stack, the straw should be trampled all over the stack and especially on the edges. It is very important that the chaff which comes with the straw be evenly distributed through the stack. If it is not, water will settle into the stack where the chaff is most plentiful and will rot it. It is best usually to dispose of this chaff by dropping it at the foot of the stack under the carrier, and after the threshing is done taking it into the barn. It is the most nutritious part of the straw, and will be readily eaten by stock in winter as a change from grain and hay.

Low Price for Machine Work.

When mowing and reaping machines first began to be used, their prices were high, and what was fully as important, few were competent to manage them. We have known instances where as high as $1 per acre was paid for cutting a meadow, and the owner of the land furnished the team. Of late years the price of machines is lower, and there are many who understand running them. The consequence is that in some neighborhoods the competition is so great that it is cheaper to hire grass and grain cut than to do it, even if the farmer had the implements and team. We have heard this year of large fields of grain being cut and bound for 80 cents per acre. As the twine for binding came out of this, the man who took the job did not earn for himself, machine and team more than 65 cents an acre. This is much cheaper than grain was ever cut by hand, and the fact that the work can be done so cheaply on large fields is one of the reasons why grain is and must continue to be low in price.—American Cultivator.

Dry Earth as a Disinfectant.

A good expedient for securing dryness in the coops is the use of dry earth scattered about under the roosts and on the floor. This acts as an absorbent of the moisture, as a disinfectant, says Farm and Fireside, and, moreover, repays all the labor spent over it by the better preservation of the useful ingredients of the droppings, and the great comfort to the attendant. The utmost cleanliness must be aimed at in order to render this possible, and the buildings must be conveniently arranged for cleaning. If they are too low or cramped, if the perches are badly arranged, and if there are nooks and corners that are difficult to get at, the result will be that the cleaning operation will never be perfectly accomplished, and little heaps of decomposing filth will remain, to the disgust of the attendant, and the damage of the health of the fowls. The most powerful aid in preserving cleanliness is the dry earth mentioned above; this should be as often renewed as it becomes well mixed with the droppings. The perches and nests should be whitewashed, and for this purpose should be movable.

Growing Clover Without Grain.

Wheat or rye are the best grains to seed with, but the low price of wheat for several years past has led many farmers to wish that they could dispense with it. It is possible to grow clover sown alone, says the Independent, but, unless the soil is reasonably free from weeds, we would prefer to sow it on grain that has had two hundred pounds per acre of superphosphate drilled in with it. The extra yield of grain will more than pay for the phosphate, and there will be the second year a better growth of clover than there will be with clover sown alone without the phosphate. We had occasion to test this many years ago, drilling once half way across a field without sowing either grain or phosphate. The clover seed was sown broadcast with a Cahoon sower, and at harvest the clover on the strip where no grain was sown was decidedly better than the other. But after harvest the clover in the grain stubble rapidly gained. By the time the ground froze we could see little, if any, difference. But the next year there was a difference, and the clover where the grain and phosphate had been distributed was fully two-thirds heavier than the other.

Dairying Is Sure.

The man who does his own work knows how it is done, and, I believe, takes more comfort than one who has to trust a large part of it to others. This is especially true of the care of cows. I keep no sheep, but cows and hens and two horses, says John Newton in the Rural New Yorker. Half the farmers around here went into horses, and many of them are weighted down with them now. Taking up dairying and sticking right to that, has been a great blessing to me. But it was very discouraging work at first with a poor pasture, and only small spots here and there on the farm on which corn could be grown. Winter dairying solved the pasture question. I turn the cows into a back pasture when they are dry the first of August. I have not become rich, but have found that, with the blessing of God, a man who is not strong, and who has a hard, stony farm, can have a happy home and bring up a family in these times of depression in agriculture.

Value of Sunflowers.

The composition and yield per acre of food constituents are tabulated by the Vermont experiment station for Japanese radish, spurry, millet, rape, soja bean, horse bean and sunflowers, and for mixtures of peas, oats and rape, hairy vetch and soja beans, hairy vetch and horse beans, and vetch, oats and rape. The largest yield of dry matter, 7,491 pounds per acre, was made by rape; this plant produced a larger crop when the drills were six inches apart than when planted at a distance of twenty-seven inches apart. Japanese radish was refused by cattle; sunflower heads afforded 2,738 pounds of dry matter per acre, containing 607 pounds of fat, a much larger quantity than that produced by any other crop.

Protecting Fruit from Winds.

There is much less cropping of orchards now than there used to be, and the result is that lower headed trees are generally prevalent. These are better on many accounts, mostly because the low heads are less exposed to heavy winds, and there is less wastage of fruit. In all exposed places further protection from winds is needed. It will pay wherever a young orchard is planted to also plant on the sides most exposed to winds a row of evergreens that shall serve as a windbreak. The loss of fruit blown down and made worthless in a single storm is often many times greater than the cost of a protection which would prevent such loss unnecessary.

Shallow Corn Cultivation.

At the agricultural experimental station at Champaign, Ill., they have tested the methods of corn culture for five successive years. Faithful trials with surface culture and deep culture of this plant have resulted quite favorably to the method of shallow cultivation.

Truth and Poetry.

Faulty road,
Half a load.
Smooth and dry,
Pile it high.

Townships Awakening.

About half of the towns in Rhode Island have asked to be included in the provisions of the good roads law, passed last January, permitting the use of $30,000 for good roads.

Hail to the Wide Tire.

The editor of the home department of the Maine Farmer approves of the wide tire law, just enacted by the Connecticut Legislature, and says: "This is the first step to be taken in Maine in the way of legislation, and this of itself will do much to insure a hard, smooth road bed. Towns and cities in Maine, where streets have been macadamized, or asphalt highways constructed, will be compelled to pass the wide tire ordinance to protect the same."

Making Good Roads.

How to build a good road is a very important subject to the people of a great nation that is just becoming fully aroused to the importance of maintaining a better system of public highways.

In his new book, "New Roads and Road Laws in the United States," Gen. Roy Stone, special agent for the United States Department of Road Inquiry, says that the perfection of roads is a fine, dry, smooth dirt track, for the reason that such a surface is easy on horse and vehicle, while free from jar and noise. He advocates narrow stone roads beside the dirt track for the reason that in wet or frosty weather dirt roads are often impassable. A dirt road in good condition is preferable to a surface of stone for driving and wheeling purposes and would save much wear on the latter, which is the more expensive of the two. As a matter of course this general suggestion is to be modified to suit different localities, but on the whole, Gen. Stone's report, made after the examination and a careful survey and study of recently built roads in all parts of the country, is a safe and scientific guide for the correct building of logical and lasting highways.

Cost of Bad Roads.

A little pamphlet called "The Gospel of Good Roads" shows that there are in the United States, draft animals—including horses, mules and oxen—representing an investment of nearly 2,000 million dollars. These farm animals are permanent and steady boarders. Busy or idle, they eat every day and must be properly cared for. Unless they are kept employed earning their living they become a source of enormous expense. The chief purpose which they serve in the winter season is transporting farm products to market and other kinds of hauling. An interference with this sort of work means the consumption of a vast amount of grain and hay, which has a money value, in maintaining the unemployed motive power of the farmer at a ruinous expense.

It has been estimated by a citizen of Indiana, who has investigated the subject very carefully, that bad roads in the State annually cost the farmer $15 for each mule and horse in his possession. Ten thousand farm horses in one month will consume $70,000 worth of feed, and this consumption goes on whether they are earning their daily rations or standing idle in their stalls.

NAPOLEON'S ABDICATION.

He Was as Great in His Fall as in His Glory.

Napoleon had ridden nearly two hundred miles without rest, and all to no purpose. Going into the little posting-house near the fountain, he dropped into a chair and, for an instant, rested his head upon the table. But, no! He must not sleep; he must work. He called for lights. He spread out the war-maps upon the table, and sticking his pins here and there, as was his custom, at once began to study the situation. Philip never forgot that scene—the gray of the morning, the group of silent soldiers and, through the open door the cottage, in the circle of flickering light, the tired and defeated leaders of men poring over his maps, planning a new campaign.

But that campaign never came. Fate was too strong for him; and, yielding to the inevitable, Napoleon finally gave up his determination to make an instant march on Paris with the troops who were following him from the eastern frontier, and rode wearily to his palace at Fontainebleau, a few miles to the south.

Bad news travels quickly. And bad news speedily found its way to Fontainebleau. The Allies entered Paris. The city—"faithful Paris," as the Emperor called it—instead of rising against the invaders, welcomed them. France was weary of war. The dignitaries of the Empire, following the lead of Talleyrand, "that arch-conspirator," one by one deserted the Emperor who had made them rich and loaded them with honors. They gave their allegiance to the new government. The white cockade and the white flag of the Bourbons appeared in the streets. "Long live the King!" began to be heard where "Long live the Emperor!" had so often been shouted. The abdication of the Emperor was demanded, and fickle Paris at last made welcome back the Bourbons whom, nearly a generation before, it had driven away in the days of terror.

Treason hastened the work. Napoleon's army, upon which he had depended for his revenge, dwindled away; and Marmont—brave Marmont, who had so valiantly defended Paris—went over with his entire corps, and forever after was esteemed a traitor by the France he hoped to serve and save.

The marshals, whom the Emperor had raised to rank and riches, joined in the cry for his abdication. They conspired against their old leader; it is claimed they even doomed him to death if he refused to obey their will.

Then, deserted by his companions-in-arms, worn out with a useless struggle—loath, now, to bring about civil war by appeals to the people who were loyal and the old soldiers who were faithful to him—Napoleon, with that serenity that marks a great soul, yielded to the inevitable, and, on April 11, 1814, signed his abdication.

This is the act of renunciation he signed—this victor, subjugated by Fate, and by his own ambition:

"The Allied Powers having proclaimed that the Emperor is the sole obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, the Emperor, faithful to his oath, declares that he renounces, for himself and for his family, the thrones of France and Italy, and that there is no sacrifice, even to that of his life, which he is not ready to make for the interests of France."

The tricolor had indeed fallen. The man who, for so many years, had given glory and greatness to France, who had distracted England with war, startled the whole continent with his success, and filled the world with his name, stepped down from his throne, and Europe once more breathed freely. Great in everything he did, Napoleon was as great in his fall as in his glory. The Empire was dead.—St. Nicholas.

That Was Different.

I was waiting for the postoffice at Huntsville to open in the morning, and meanwhile talking to a colored janitor, who was sweeping and dusting, when a negro boy, about 15 years old, came along and beckoned the janitor to step aside. The old man looked at him sharply, but did not comply.

"Say, yo'!" called the young man.

There was no reply to this, and after a minute he called again:

"Boy! What yo' wants wid me?" sternly demanded the janitor.

"I wants to speak wid yo'."

"Who is yo'?"

"Yo' know who I is. Yo' is dun engaged to my sister Evangeline."

"Oh! Yo' is her brudder Sam. Waal, what yo' want?"

"Kin yo' lend me ten cents?"

"On what grounds, sah?"

"On de grounds dat yo' is gwine to be my brudder-in-law."

"Boy, doan yo' know nuffin 'tall 'bout philosophy?" shouted the janitor as he raised his broom over his shoulder. "My bein' engaged to yo'r sister Evangeline as a private citizen, an' my standin' heah representin' de United States guv'ment an' talkin' wid a gem'-lan besides, am two entirely different contestashuns. As yo'r fucher brudder-in-law I'd like to obleege yo', but as a representative of dis guv'ment I doan' know yo' from Adam, an' if yo' doan' move on I'll hev to smash yo' to bone dust!"

Exterminating Burdocks.

Like all biennials, the burdock is easily destroyed in cultivated fields. It is only in by-places, as fence sides, lanes, corners, around the buildings, pastures and the borders of woodlands that burdocks give trouble. But even in these they are not difficult to destroy. Farmers who go over their field twice a year with the spud will soon have no burdocks. In cutting them, care should be taken to strike below the crown. Every plant cut in this way must die. The cutting may be done at any time of the year when the ground is not frozen, and it is, of course, much more easily done when the plants are young. While it is not difficult to cut off a small tap root with the spud, it is much more difficult to accomplish the same when the root has attained a diameter of an inch or more. Two or three years of persistent spudding will remove nearly all burdocks from the by-places of our farms.—Ohio Farmer.

Made from Wood.

Wood mosaics are now manufactured in a purely mechanical way at the Paris Palace of Industry. The scale of colors is extremely rich, their being no fewer than 12,000 different shades that can be used. This being the case, the very best paintings of the old masters can be faithfully reproduced. The great advantage attained in a mosaic is that, should the colors fade, they can be restored to their original hue by plaining, because the fibre of the wood is thoroughly and evenly permeated by the colors. These mosaics are durably affixed to boards, with their colors beautifully exhibited by placing the grain of the wood at the surface.

The Per Capita Wealth.

The average wealth throughout the world, taking the population at 1,500,000,000, is about £65 per head, according to recent calculations. Russia, in spite of her great natural resources, appears to be the poorest civilized nation on the face of the globe.

The Blind.

By means of a recent invention the blind are enabled to write with facility, using the ordinary Roman alphabet. The invention is described as a hinged metal plate with square perforations arranged in parallel lines, inside of which the stylus is moved in making the letters.