TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

VAIN people would be much happier if they had the courage to come down to real life.

A STATESMAN may sometimes be a politician, but it does not necessarily follow that a politician is always a statesman.

READER, to be perfectly honest, did you ever throw a bootjack at a cat, or did you ever know anybody else who did?

THE knot is a nautical mile, and its length is fixed at 6,080 feet. The land mile in England and the United States is 5,280 feet.

A LADY older than the Constitution of the United States has just died in New Orleans. She must have had a good constitution herself.

WHEN you feel certain that you have exhausted every effort, you are next door to the object of your ambition. Never give up while you live.

FIVE men in and about Boston have dined together once a year for fifty consecutive years. This is an extraordinary case of somnambulism.

A PETITION has been circulated in Cleveland and numerously signed asking for the passage of a city ordinance requiring wider tires on wheeled vehicles. The Clevelanders are getting at the secret of road reform.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM FITZHUGH GORDON, whose death occurred recently in Washington, was sentenced to be shot as a Confederate spy during the war. He was facing the firing party when his reprieve arrived, carried by a mounted messenger.

MR. NEARY of Newark, N. J., has received from the Treasury Department a new $5 note for one that was eaten by his goat, which he killed to recover the fragments that accompanied the affidavit. Neary is in a $5 bill and out a $2 William.

A number of school misses in Philadelphia made a gown for Vice President Stevenson when he was elected last fall, under the impression that when presiding in the United States Senate he must be robed after the present fashion of the justices on the Supreme bench.

A BOSTON judge has decided that a man's face is his own, and that an artist has no right to reproduce the sacred lineaments without their owner's consent. This same judge should go a bit farther and make a ruling holding the sun to be an accessory before the fact when the "artist" uses a kodak.

WHEN an undertaker's wife adjusts a noose about her throat while standing on a barrel, puts a revolver to her temple, blows her brains out, kicks the barrel away, breaks her neck, and is discovered hanging by the neighbors it's a sign she was tired of life. And a woman in Millvale, Pa., did all this.

THIS seems to be very cold weather for Indian medicine men. Within the past week two have been killed because they did not effect the cures they promised. There are some of the methods of the wild and untutored Indian that might be adopted by the civilized whites, and their treatment of unsuccessful physicians is one of them.

CORBETT, with that frankness of expression habitual with men who live by fighting and by talking about fighting, says that he will be doing the American public a favor by whipping Mitchell. This may be true as to a large majority of the people, but in order to entirely satisfy a divided public sentiment, it will be necessary for both men to be well whipped.

LOUISE MICHEL, the female anarchist, says this country is too young to indulge in bomb throwing. Louise, you are up to snuff. This country is altogether too young and vigorous to try the bom-throwing business to any extent. It's just young enough to string of the fellows who indulge in that kind of business, and it has given an example of its ability and vigor in that line. If necessary it can do so again.

THE wife of a missionary to Africa gives some amusing details of the mercantile value of certain articles among the natives, needles and cloth ranking highest. They are absolutely current coins. Three needles will purchase one chicken, one needle two eggs. Old tin and empty bottles are also much in request, old cans taking the place of drinking cups. A fowl can be had for two yards of cotton or a small piece of cloth.

SOMETHING must be done to put a stop to the Carnival of Crime in this town, says the Chicago Herald. So long as the bandits confined themselves to holding up railroad treasurers, postoffice cashiers and other persons of small importance the public suffered in silence. But when the palladium or the aegis or the whatever it is of our liberties—in other words, the faro banks—are looted by dastardly villains it is time to call a halt, also to call out the militia and put the village under martial law again. Whither are we at, anyhow?

THE Western Pacific is a great place for islands that emerge from waves unexpectedly, and as suddenly disappear. Sometimes they come up to stay, but more often they have an existence merely temporary. The wondering skipper misses a familiar landmark by which he has been accustomed to get his bearings, and perhaps the next day he runs his vessel's nose upon a brand-new piece of territory that has sprung up out of the water since he last came that way. The region south of Japan is so given to this sort of eccentricity that ships avoid it. Volcanic action is responsible for such phenomena.

A FEW of the original tribe of Cherokee Indians have never left their Eastern home. There are about 1,600 of them, and their number is increasing. They live in a wild, mountainous section of western North Carolina, and their chief town is known as Yellow Hill. The climate is very healthy, and one of the oldest Cherokees known as "Big Witch," says he is 115 years old. Hunting is not only their amusement but their means of getting a living. Deer and other wild animals are still abundant in this section of the State. During the war these Indians were Confederates, and raised a regiment which followed the Confederate fortunes till the surrender at Appomattox.

IN these naturalization times a certain fact should be known. A late decision was given in a Nebraska case, in which a clerk of the court had taken his book and official seal and had traveled through the country dealing out naturalization papers to such aliens as the local politicians indicated would vote for the party to which he belonged. These naturalization certificates were decided to be fraudulent and invalid. A man can be made a citizen only in an open court of record before a judge at the usual place of holding court. A mere clerk or deputy cannot hold a constructive term of court at a country tavern or under a cottonwood tree by the roadside and issue to local crowds lawful naturalization papers.

IF it prove true that an iceberg eight miles long and 1,500 feet high was lately seen in the North Atlantic, it would indicate an unusual breaking up of polar ice the past summer, and prove that the season of 1893 in the far North was an unusually warm one. It is out of the season for very large icebergs to be seen coming to the southward. They are most common in June and July, that being the time when the yearly growth of the ice glaciers breaks off and floats away. This iceberg seems to have been a much larger one than has been reported in many years. It raises the query whether ice in the Arctic regions is not decreasing, indicating a falling off of the usual degrees of cold. The first effect of such a process would be to send southward larger quantities of Arctic ice to be thawed.

FLOYD COUNTY, VA., has some enterprising farmers whose good example might be copied by others. They have organized a "Corn Club," its object being to test the amount of corn that an acre of Floyd land will produce. The member producing the largest yield from an acre in 1894 will receive $10 in gold, and at the time of awarding the prize the club will give an old Floyd County Thanksgiving dinner of roast turkey. Such experiments as these are really useful and could be carried on to advantage in counties in this State. There is no better way than this to study the resources of one's land, and incidentally to learn what can be done on a small piece of land. The capabilities by the acre in the same section have never been discovered by concerted action among the farmers, and it would be worth trying.

Small Fry.

To a third party it is sometimes surprising how much pride a large man can take in catching a small fish. So it must have seemed to a sarcastic young woman of whom we read in the Washington Star:

Two or three young men were exhibiting with great satisfaction the results of a day's fishing, whereupon this young woman remarked, very demurely:

"Fish go in schools, do they not?"

"I believe they do; but why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing, only I was just thinking that you must have broken up an infant class."

WASTE of wealth is sometimes retrieved.

AGRICULTURAL NEWS

A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR OUR RURAL READERS.

How to Protect Young Fruit Trees from Rabbits—Profits from Poultry—When a House Should Be Watered—Matters About the Farm.

Cheap and Effective Tree Guards.

It is astonishing how much damage two or three rabbits can do to a young orchard in a single night. Four years ago I had an orchard of seventy trees planted, on open ground, between my house and that of a neighbor. The orchard was well cultivated, and the ground kept entirely clear of weeds and trash; and as my neighbor kept two hunting dogs, which made it their business to kill every rabbit that ventured into that locality, I thought it entirely unnecessary to provide any protection for the trees. Late in the winter there came a light fall of snow, accompanied by severe cold weather. I looked over the orchard the following morning and not a track of any kind was to be seen, but the second morning I noticed a few rabbit tracks, and to my great surprise I found that fully one-third of the trees had been gnawed, four of them being completely girdled. The tracks showed plainly that the mischief had been done by rabbits. My neighbor brought his two dogs, and we hunted

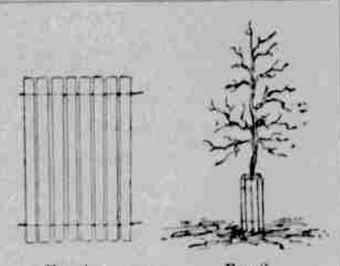

FIG. 1. WOVEN TREE GUARD. FIG. 2. PROTECTED TREE.

the entire locality over, but could find only two rabbits, in the stomachs of which we found tree bark. We followed their back tracks and found that they had come from a swampy tract, six miles distant.

I immediately bound up the wounds on the trees with strips of cloth, and, as soon as the ground thawed a little, I took four-inch drain tile, broke them open lengthwise, and, removing the cloth, inclosed each of the trees with one of them, binding them together with small wire. These tiles were then filled with fine soil, and kept full until the first of October, when they were opened and the trees examined. In every instance the wounds were entirely healed, the bark having grown over them, and the trees were in a healthy, thrifty condition. In a few cases, roots had started out from the edges of the healing wounds, but the autumn drouth had stopped their growth. During the last three years I have tiled quite a number of injured trees for neighbors and friends, and in every instance they have healed completely.—G. Frederick in American Agriculturist.

Profits in Poultry.

There is one source of revenue from poultry keeping that is too often neglected. It may be because it is not generally known that all kinds of feathers are salable. The demand is increasing every year, and most country merchants will take them and sell them on commission. The fowls must be dry picked, and the feathers clean and in good condition. The tail and quill feathers should be packed separately from those which are softer. Separate the several kinds, and also separate those from different kinds of poultry. The proceeds from the feathers should repay the cost of picking and all the labor of preparing the fowl for the market.

Poultry keeping when the business is properly conducted and with an eye mainly to egg production, is extremely profitable. Experiments in feeding and in computing the value of eggs show that if no estimate is made for labor one dozen eggs can be produced at a cost of about 6 cents for food, or about half a cent an egg. If all the food consumed by the fowls went directly to egg production the profit would always be very good; but much depends upon whether the hens convert this food into eggs, flesh, or the support of their bodies; but, as we have said, when the feeding is properly conducted, the profit procured is a satisfactory one. Another fact which should also be considered is that when eggs are marketed they carry from the farm but little of the nutritious elements of the soil in proportion to their value.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Banish the Weeds.

The Germantown Telegraph says: "With any of the class of cultivated crops where there is a real neglect of proper cultivation, the effect is felt in the crop harvested. This fact is demonstrated by a little observation, and a few moments' consideration of the case leads to no other conclusion. Wherever vegetable growth is going on, there is being taken from the soil elements of fertility, and if these are diverted to a noxious growth then they are lost to the main purpose of the farm. To say nothing of the unpleasant appearance produced, the effect upon any crop is very damaging in the diminished crop production. Take the case of corn and potatoes and with the eye as a judge, we believe that a neglect in culture that allows a rank growth of weeds, will reduce the yield of both fodder and grain at least one-third. This is especially the case where large weeds are allowed to grow among potatoes, and in and about the hills; the crop will be light and of small size. No farmer can afford to put his fields to such use. If he cannot properly attend to the matter of cultivation himself, or cause it to be done by others, he had far better confine his effort to a smaller surface and such an one as can be sufficiently and properly attended to. It is to be feared that sufficient attention is not paid to the eradication of weeds. These are the pests of our farms that exert so powerful an influence in the withdrawal of our fertility. Hold as much as possible for the use of crops."

How to Save the Manure.

How to save the barnyard manure in the best condition is the problem every farmer ought to solve. If left alone during the winter a large portion of it, and that the best of it, is washed away by the melting snows and rain. We like the plans of Prof. Georgeson, of the Kansas Experiment Station. He forms a large basin in the barnyard and piles all the manure upon it. The liquid manure cannot escape, but remains in the depression till taken away in the spring. He thus describes the basin:

A large basin was scooped up, some five feet deep in the middle and gently sloping to all sides, so that a heavily loaded wagon can be pulled up without unduly straining the team. The bottom was found to be of a clayey nature, so that seepage could not take place. The whole was done in a satisfactory manner by the use of plow and scoop, with one team and two men, in a couple of day's time. So the expense connected with the improvement was merely nominal. I believe I can say that the manure has value since we began piling it in this basin. There has been no waste from drainage, and there has been less actual shrinkage due to the decomposition than in a heap lying high and dry."

Watering a Horse.

It would be better for a farm horse if he could be given water at some time between morning an noon and noon and night. There seems to be a variety of opinions touching this point. It is almost a universal habit to give farm horses water but three times a day—morning, noon and night. There seems to be no better reason for this than that it is convenient to do so, and that it would be inconvenient to do otherwise as a rule. All agree that the horse ought to have what water he needs rather than what he wants. If left to go thirsty a half day after eating heating food at hard work there is no limit to the amount of water he wants, except what he will hold, when he reaches the trough. To fill up on cold water when the animal is in a heated condition is one of the most damaging things that can be done a horse, and yet because it happens to be convenient to let him do this, the practice has come into vogue. Most farmers could find a way to remedy the matter if they would, and it would be humane for them to do so, and profitable, likewise.

Corn Clover.

Prof. Roberts says: The corn gets a large amount of its plant food from the sun. This is free carbon—a free gift of the gods, and never exhausts the soil. Carbonaceous matter never exhausts the soil. Carbon is not manure. The plant gets it from the sunlight. Therefore the corn, being largely carbonaceous, takes comparatively little out of the soil. Now, the clover plant actually produces nitrogen. The soil that has 5,000 pounds of nitrogen in it this year, if it grows a crop of clover next year and we take off two tons of clover hay, actually has more nitrogen in it than it did the year before.

The Quality of Pork.

American pork has been pronounced healthful and is admitted to all the markets of Europe. But the European appetite is fastidious. Pork that is made from corn has not so good a flavor as that made from peas and barley. The pea makes pork having a larger proportion of lean meat. We can make as good pork as any country, but to satisfy European markets we must supply bacon that has lean as well as fat in its composition. Pork made from whole wheat, or wheat and oats ground together, ought to satisfy this demand.

Agricultural Atoms.

GROUND bone makes a lasting and satisfactory fertilizer.

THE most nutritive part of the wheat goes with the bran.

DO NOT let any weeds go to seed around your house and barn.

AN even temperature of 50 degrees is a good one for the winter hen house.

DO NOT be in too big a hurry to store the corn. Let it be well cured before cribbing.

BETTER do a little and do it well rather than undertake to do too much and fail to do anything well.

WHEN trimming shrubs and bushes cut out the wood; leave the new for next season's bloom and fruitage.

NEVER permit a piece of land to lie idle because it is rough. Stock it with sheep and they will at least pay the interest and taxes.

KEEP the work teams in good condition. There is no advantage in letting them run down now and being obliged to feed up later on.

A BOX of coal ashes in the hen yard give the hens lots of employment. They find a lot of grit among it, and have fine sport wallowing in the dust. But never give them wood ashes.

THE North American Bee Keepers' Association recommends that apiarian societies of the various states memorialize their respective legislatures to enact laws that shall forbid the spraying of fruit trees during time of blossoming.

A POWERFUL TONGUE.

How a Querulous Servant Changed the Course of an Artist's Life.

There lived in the service of Paolo Minucci a cook whom the famous painter, Salvator Rosa, struck by the man's humor, called his "grinning philosopher," and with whom the famous artist sometimes amused himself.

One day as he sat carelessly on the edge of a marble table chatting with his cook, the conversation took a turn which enabled the man to utter an attack upon the notorious extravagance of the painter. Salvator Rosa, after endeavoring to parry the blow by a defence of his contempt of wealth on philosophical grounds, laughingly concluded his argument by saying:

"One thing is certain; in the hour I have wasted with you I might have earned a hundred scudi."

The cook, with an exclamation of amazement, said boldly:

"Now what does all this talk about philosophy and independence, and the like, come to? Suppose your philosophers up lost your voice by a cold, your hand by an accident, or your leg by a fall, what then becomes of this same philosophy?

"What then would be our famous Signor Rosa? Signor Rosa, the marvelous painter, the improvisatore, the poet and actor? No, marry, it would then be Signor Rosa the cripple, Signor Rosa the pauper, Signor Rosa the mendicant! I see him now at the porch of one of our churches, with his staff and his poor-box, saluting the good devotees as they pass, with:

"'Carita, signor, Christiani miei!'

"Philosophy in sooth! I never yet could see the beauty of that philosophy which leads to the staff and the poor-box!"

The cook went about his work, but when Minucci returned to his home he found Rosa seated on the marble table, absorbed in thought. He announced to his friend an immediate reform in pecuniary habits, and laid out a plan for himself by which he appeared as a prospective miser.

When Minucci mildly remonstrated with him on the danger of extremes in all things, Salvator sprung from the table, crying:

"What! do you want to reduce me to beggary? And to behold me standing at a church porch with a staff and a box, and 'Carita, signori, Christiani miei!'"

Minucci was amazed by this outburst, and at first thought the artist had gone mad, but on inquiry he discovered that his buffoon of a cook had done more by his word picture than all the learned men and sage friends of Salvator had been able to effect by reiterated counsels of economical reform.

House Plants in Winter.

In the ordinary dwelling there is generally too high a temperature, too much dust and a deficiency in light, air and moisture. Some persons seem to have a knack of making all kinds of plants grow under the most unfavorable circumstances. A cutting, when put in by their hands will always take root; the plant assumes the desired form; it is always free from insects and mildew, sets its buds early and blossoms most abundantly. Is this owing to a magnetic attraction existing between such persons and their plants?

Rooms in which plants are grown should be aired thoroughly on all sunny days and moderately on all other days. In very cold or windy weather care should be taken that cold air does not come in contact with the plant. To avoid this, lower the sashes a very little from the top and admit fresh air from one adjoining. Let the temperature be considerably lower at night than during the day; the same difference as there is between day and night during summer, out of doors.

All plants should be carefully examined daily to guard against insect pests; destroy at once any that may appear, and pick off all dead or dying leaves. Water sparingly this month, excepting such plants as are making rapid growth. Syringe daily when the weather is mild and the day clear until the plants are well established. Syringing will furnish all the water that is required. Watering is one of the most important parts of plant culture; more plants are injured, if not ruined, by over and untimely watering than from any other cause.

Do not apply water until the plant asks for it, which it will do by a graceful drooping of the foliage when the sun shines fully upon it; then water amply, as though it rained hard, and do not water again until needed. The common practice of watering regularly, morning and evening, without regard to necessity, is a frequent cause of plant disease. Some days a plant will require far more water than on others, as evaporation is more or less rapid; observe this and act accordingly.

One of the chief causes of failure in growing house plants is the overheated rooms in which they are placed. We often see plants in broken pitchers and old fruit cans, growing in the small and narrow window of a poor man's humble cottage, far more luxuriant and healthy than those in the overheated houses of the rich, because during most of the winter plants in their natural state make but little growth, the most care needed being protection from frost. The cool rooms of the poor, ill ventilated though they may be, furnished more fresh air than can survive the furnace heat and the unconsumed gases of a house "with all the modern improvements."—American Gardening.

Only a Shoe.

Hero worship sometimes runs to ridiculous extremes. A distinguished landscape painter once left his carpet slippers behind him in the humble village lodging where for three months he had lived and worked. His careful wife at once sent for her husband's slippers; his landlady sent one slipper, begging, at the same time, to keep the other as a memento.

Duck Antics.

Many kinds of birds indulge in curious aerial performances during the mating and breeding season. Some of the best-known instances are those of the night-hawk, the woodcock, and the snipe. Mr. E. W. Nelson, in his "Birds of Alaska," says that the pintail duck has some very peculiar habits of this kind.

He once saw a pair rise into the air and start off, the male in full chase after the female at a marvelous rate of speed. Back and forth they went, with frequent quick turns, now almost out of sight overhead, now skimming along the ground in an involved course very difficult for the eye to follow. Soon a second male joined in the chase, then a third, and so on, till six males were vying with each other in the pursuit.

The original pursuer seemed to be the only one capable of keeping close to the coy female, and even he, from her dexterous turns and curves, was able to draw near only at intervals. Then he always passed under her, and kept so close to her that the two pairs of wings clattered together with a noise like a watchman's rattle, and audible a long distance.

The chase lasted for half an hour. One by one the males dropped off, till finally but one of them—the original one, Mr. Nelson believes—was left. Then the pair settled into one of the ponds.

At other times Mr. Nelson saw a female, when pursued in this way by several males, plunge under water at full speed, and suddenly take wing again a few yards beyond, the males all the while after her.

The pintail has also a habit, during the mating season, of descending from a great altitude at an angle of about forty-five degrees, with the wings stiffly outspread and slightly curved downward. The bird is frequently so high that the noise produced by its passage through the air is heard for fifteen or twenty seconds before the bird comes into sight.

He descends with meteor-like swiftness till he is within a few yards of the ground, when a slight change in the position of the wings sends him gliding away close to the ground from one hundred to three hundred yards without a wing-stroke. The sound produced by this swift passage through the air can only be compared to the rushing of a gale through the tree-tops. At first it is like a murmur; then it rises to a hiss; and as the bird sweeps by, it is almost a roar.—Youth's Companion.

Witnessing Executions.

The change that has come over men's minds with regard to the advantages to be derived from witnessing the execution of criminals is worth noting. At the beginning of our century it was the opinion of almost every one that these sights were very beneficial, because they tended to warn those with criminal longings what might be their own fate. I remember, when the bill was before Parliament for causing executions to take place in private, hearing more than one person say that if these great public warnings were withdrawn murders would become more frequent. Subsequently experience has not fulfilled the prophecy.

So firmly was it impressed on the popular mind that gazing on the death agony of felons was a wholesome experience for the young that I know of instances where poor unhappy boys have been compelled to be spectators of the tragedy.

The late Mr. William Howerby, Sr., of Messingham Hall, a gentleman who died at a mature age some quarter of a century ago, told me that when he was at school at Lincoln, as the execution days came round, a whole holiday was given, so as to afford the boys the means of improving their morals by gazing on the hanging. I have often mentioned this note of barbarism in conversation, and have sometimes thought that those who had heard me were under the impression that I was romancing or had been misinformed.

To-day I have met with a confirmation of the statement. Mr. Best in his "Personal and Literary Memorials," 1829, page 263, says that when he was at the Lincoln Grammar School the master "dismissed the boys half an hour before noon, that they might arrive in time at the place of execution, when there was a man to be hanged."

Some persons have a strange hankering after sights of this kind. We need not refer to past times. I met a gentleman in society some seven or eight years ago who had been present at thirty-six executions. He was the only man I ever met who seriously objected to the death penalty being carried out in private.—Notes and Queries.

For the Fair Face of Her.

There are few women who have not had at some time or another use for a face powder, even though as a rule they eschew anything on that order. A violet powder which can be compounded is composed of wheat starch, three pounds; powdered orris, half pound. Mix together and add attar of lemon, one-eighth of an ounce; attar of bergamot and cloves, each one-half dram. For those troublesome blackheads that so often disfigure the face that is blessed with the most classical features the following compound works wonders: Take kaolin, four drams; glycerine, three drams; acetic acid, two drams, and oil of lemon, five drops. Apply this every night and after a few days the black specks can be easily pressed out, or most of them will even come out by washing with pumice stone soap.