

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

THE fountain of youth consists of working every day, eating and drinking regularly and moderately, and sleeping nine hours every night.

FOOTBALL is said to be more brutal than baseball; yet we notice a great many baseball players "die" on bases, while football victims are taken to hospitals.

MAD love seems to be more dangerous than gunpowder and matches. Every day some fellow blows his girl's brains out, or some divorced fellow kills his former wife.

SOME people have a queer idea of humor. If they learn that anyone is particularly "tender" on a certain subject, they never fail to bring it up, and talk about it. This is not humor; this is brutality.

SPEAKING of worrying, which kills more people than disease, keep a record for a month, and see if you do not worry over a great many things that turn out all right. And a matter that occasionally causes you worry turns out to be particularly fortunate.

OLD ladies, who are the wisest people in the world, say he is not the best husband who says "darling" oftenest, but who provides his wife with a comfortable home. This love-making is the silliest moonshine compared to a daily supply of good bread and butter.

IT makes no difference for what purpose a meeting is called, or what enthusiasm has been manifested, the audience becomes as cold as a pup's nose when the collection basket is brought out. The people would rather shout and wave handkerchiefs for an hour when the newspapers are abused, than donate a dime.

THE high school pupils, after consulting grandmother, grandfather, uncles, aunts, parents, sisters and brothers, get their essays prepared, and hand them in. Two teachers, the principal and the superintendent go over them then with blue pencils, and the pupil is compelled to copy, leave out parts, insert suggestions, and finally, after a half dozen repetitions of this process, the essay is ready for commencement night. Then a heartless public complains that the essays do not sound "original." In most cases, all that is heard of the pupil's original attempt is the title and signature.

A BOSTONIAN in Spain writes that the trains in Spain are certainly the slowest of all creation. A rate of ten or twelve miles an hour is considered a good average of speed for everyday travelers. When the Spanish officials wish to put on style and show visiting foreigners what they really can accomplish in the way of rapidity, they offer express trains which dash madly across the landscape at an average rate of fifteen to eighteen miles an hour. In one way this proves an advantage, for the traveler sees a great deal more scenery for his money than if he were pushed past it more swiftly.

SOME new cars on one of the Eastern railroads that have been constructed without the accustomed mirror at each end call out an indignant protest from the Philadelphia Press. That paper insists that although they may be neither beautiful nor artistic they serve a useful purpose. It is inflicting an unwarranted hardship upon the women passengers to deprive them of an opportunity to see that their hair is properly curled and that their hats are setting correctly as they get up to leave the car. The women should institute a boycott to have the mirrors replaced in their usual positions.

THEY are always bringing out novelties over in Jersey. Their latest discovery is a dashing girl burglar, who is said to be captain of a band which makes nights very unpleasant for the wealthy dwellers in villas. An added pliancy is giving to the story by the statement that the fair crackswoman is well connected and has been wont to move in good society. We are evidently on the verge of a new series of dime and half-dime novels, in which girl burglars, girl detectives, and young highway-women are to be chased by female Old Sleuths through the maze of exciting adventure common to that sort of literature.

IF there are a boy and girl in a family, both earning money and paying the same board, a distinction is made in favor of the boy that is very unjust. He does no work around the home; the girl does a great deal in the odd moments. The boy spends no money on little "improvements"

round the house; the girl spends a great deal. The boy's mending is done for him, the girl does hers when she comes home tired out at night. The boy grumbles that he wants this or that at the table, and his mother or sister get up and wait on him. The girl has to wait on herself, and on others too. A boy fares best when he boards at home; in almost every instance, a self-supporting girl fares better if she boards among strangers.

ENGLISH farming is changing fast from grain growing to a grazing and meadow. This is owing to the low prices of all kinds of grain, and especially of wheat. Each successive year a smaller acreage is put in wheat, and even with a full crop per acre there is a continued increase in the demand for foreign wheat for bread. In 1873, the wheat acreage was 3,400,000 acres. Last year this was only 1,867,000 acres, and the present crop shows a further reduction. There has also been a decrease in land sown to other grains. Barley has decreased 300,000 acres in twenty years, beans 340,000 and peas 10,000 acres. There is an increase in the acreage sown to oats, the increasing population of the island requiring a larger part of its land to support the horses for draught and the cows for giving milk. The acreage of permanent pasture shows a very large increase. It looks, to use a slang phrase, as if English farming was "going to grass" at a most unhealthy rate.

THE creation of a national bureau of health is strenuously urged by Surgeon General Sternberg of the army, who takes the advanced view that the public health should have been represented from the first by a cabinet officer. Very few outside of the ranks of the surgeon general's professional brethren will be likely to coincide with this view, but a great many will approve his proposal for establishing a bureau of health in the Department of the Interior, which was recommended some time ago by the New York Academy of Medicine. It is only when there is a threatened invasion of some particularly dreaded disease like cholera that everybody becomes aroused to the necessity of a general system for the protection of the public health, and yet Surgeon General Sternberg makes the impressive statement that the mortality from the preventable diseases which prevail in all parts of the country, such as consumption, typhoid fever, and diphtheria, is far greater than that caused by cholera or yellow fever in those countries where they prevail habitually. Even in the countries where the exotic maladies flourish the mortality from them is not so great as from the non-preventable diseases. The Surgeon General expresses the belief, based upon foreign statistics, that a national bureau of health would mean an added saving to the country of 65,000 lives every year, an assumption which, if it were possible to verify it, would justify a liberal expenditure for such a bureau. Establishing safeguards for the public health is a well recognized function of government and the proposal of Surgeon General Sternberg is certainly entitled to earnest consideration.

ELECTRICITY AND FIRES. The first reports put in circulation as to the origin of the fire at Talmage's Tabernacle in Brooklyn, attributed it, of course, to an electric wire—somewhere in the vicinity of the organ, it was said. This was inevitable, as every mysterious fire will be laid at the door of electricity until some new idea gets possession of the popular mind on the subject. But the trustees of the church now say that it was not, and that the fire was, as indeed, seems more than probable, of incendiary origin. It may not be generally remembered that when the Tabernacle was burned down before, the Fire Marshal of Brooklyn alleged that the cause was lightning, which "had struck the wire" and had passed in through the switchboard connecting the church with the street electric circuits. This ingenious theory was received very seriously and held its own until, in clearing up the remains, the switchboard that had succumbed to lightning was found incumbered in the mass of debris, and was, in reality, about the only thing remaining unharmed. Electricians, therefore, received the latest stories with considerable suspicion, making the comment that Dr. Talmage was a man who had probably won bitter enemies as well as enthusiastic friends, and that the fire waited very patiently until the church had been cleared of its large congregation. The previous fire was equally careful, they pointed out, to avoid taking life. As a matter of fact, fires will occur from electricity as from any other source of light and heat, but proper precautions will always reduce such dangers to the minimum. It was recently noted by a marine authority that fires at sea had diminished enormously in number since electric lighting was introduced on board steamships and men-of-war.

THERE is a reason to assume that the contribution box is not run on a gold basis.

WOMAN'S WILES.

A fellow landed on a cannibal island. In the far-off Southern sea, And he said to himself, with a snicker and a smile, "I'm glad that the Boveree was where I was born and where I was raised. For these niggers are up to snuff. And they won't eat me either boiled or braised. For they know that I'm too tough." So up the shore, with a confident air, He went, those folk to meet, And they sized him up right then and there, As much to laugh to see.

GOT IN AT BRUGES.

Mr. Portman Dibbs was a prosperous, elderly gentleman, of quiet ways and fixed habit. A small circle of familiar friends supplied all his social needs; he concerned himself little with the rest of humanity, belonging to the class who can live side by side in the same street with a fellow-creature all their lives without so much as knowing him by sight. Among Mr. Dibbs' fixed habits was a yearly tour. But he did not take it, like most people, in the summer months, but in the early spring. In 18—, when March came round, he made the usual preparations for his yearly tour in his customary way. On the evening before his departure, an old city friend, Mr. Goldsmith, dined with him at his house in Harley street. When about to leave, Goldsmith drew a small case from his pocket. "I brought this with me," on the chance that you were going to Lucerne. You will do me a great favor by giving it into my brother's hands there. It contains a brilliant of such rare value that I could not trust it to few—there is no risk, as no one will know you have such a thing with you." "Anything to oblige a friend," said Dibbs, lightly. "I would take the hob-nob as a traveling-companion under the same circumstances." The two men were standing at the study window, the blind of which happened to be up. While in the act of placing the case in his pocket, Dibbs' eyes wandered to the street. At that moment the light from a lamp in front of the door struck on the face of a man standing there—a peculiar, dark face, with straight black whiskers. The man moved on; Dibbs drew back hastily. "None of your people knew that you were giving me this commission?" he inquired of Goldsmith. "Not a soul, my dear fellow; the matter is entirely between you and me. My head clerk alone knows of the existence of the brilliant." "What is he like?" "Like you—like me. Respectability itself. What are you thinking of?" "Has he black whiskers?" "Grey as a badger's—white, even. But, bless my soul, what is the matter? What do you mean? Have you seen anyone?" "A man was standing there by the lamp-post as you handed me the jewel case. He was apparently looking at us, and might have heard what was said." "Then he must be in the street still," said Goldsmith, throwing up the window and peering his head out; Dibbs did the same. The night was bright. Not a soul was to be seen anywhere—the street was quite deserted. "A neighbor or a neighbor's butler. He has gone into some house," Goldsmith withdrew from the window. "In any case no one could have heard, nor, I should think, have seen us." Portman Dibbs set out next morning for Lucerne via Brussels and the Rhine, staying a few days at Ostend on the way. He took his place in the undeniable comfort of a first-class carriage in the express to Brussels with a mind as free from care and uneasiness as elderly gentleman ever possessed. Nearly an hour had passed before Dibbs laid down his paper and glanced round the carriage. He was thinking of the parliamentary debate he had been reading, and not at all of his fellow travelers, when, on a sudden, his eye caught that of the man opposite curiously fixed on him. Each becoming aware of the other's glance, withdrew his at once, not, however, before Dibbs' attention had been engaged. Was the man a complete stranger, as he had supposed? Had he not seen the face before? And when? Where? The face was peculiar, with straight, black whiskers. With the suddenness of a flash Dibbs' memory was illumined. The man opposite was the same who had stood in the lamp-light outside the window in Harley street. There was no doubt of it; no mistaking the unusual face and remarkable whiskers. On a sudden impulse, Dibbs put his hand to feel the jewel-case in his breast-pocket; as he did so, his eyes met those of the stranger fixed on him with a peculiar expression. By a chain of reasoning, of which he felt half ashamed, Dibbs, before reaching Brussels, decided on changing his usual hotel, the Bellevue, for the less-known Nassau. Setting out for the latter, he lost sight of his fellow-traveler on the crowded platform of the station.

Fixity of habit as a creed cannot be lightly renounced. Dibbs was miserable at the Nassau, simply because it was not the accustomed Bellevue. Discontent with himself and everything else was the result. "What an ass I have made of myself about that man who came in at Bruges!" was the burden of his thoughts while smoking his after-dinner cigar. "His being in the train was a mere coincidence. I probably has never cast a thought about me. I must walk this nonsense out of my brain." As Dibbs left the room he passed, at the door, a late guest being ushered into a solitary dinner. With a certain revision of feeling he recognized his fellow-traveler. The object of his thoughts. The earliest train for Cologne next morning saw Dibbs' departure from Brussels—an alteration in his usual program, which always included a day or two in that bright capital. The closest scrutiny of the train did not discover his bugbear; there was no sign of him at Cologne. A tranquil night in his accustomed hotel restored Dibbs' mental balance. Inverting to his usual habit, he took his way by boat up the Rhine. Spending one night at Mayence, the following found him at the Three Kings in Basle, his last halting-place before Lucerne. In the pleasant coolness of a moonlit night he sat on the terrace of the hotel overlooking the Rhine. His mind was as undisturbed as the peaceful scene around. Suddenly he became aware of the presence of another man on the terrace, and to Dibbs' eyes were abruptly revealed the face and figure of the man with the black whiskers. The shock was tremendous; its suddenness was too much for him. All the clear reasoning by which he had convinced himself of the groundlessness and folly of his alarm at Brussels was now overturned and swept out of sight. He was shadowed by the man below. That was beyond a doubt. Whoever he was, the secret of the diamond was known to him. Either chance or design had made him acquainted with it on that night in Harley street. The success of his manœuvre in leaving Brussels made him repeat it, and besides, he was in a perfect fever to get to the end of his journey and rid himself of the charge of the diamond. His spirits rose considerably as the hour of the train's departure drew near without any appearance of the "shadower" in the station. Dibbs remained on the platform until the last moment, then, with a fervent sigh of relief, he entered the railway carriage. The train was just moving off, when the door was suddenly opened, and a breathless porter dashed in a hand-bag and a parcel of rugs, followed by a still more breathless traveler. The door was shut, the engine shrieked the last departing signal, the train moved from Basle station. In one corner of the carriage sat Dibbs; in another—the farthest on the opposite side—sat the man with the black whiskers. A long journey lay before them, and Dibbs was unarmed. At this review of the situation his heart sank; he drew back instinctively into the corner. His eyes suddenly met those of the other man; a deep flush suffused his face, which seemed to find a reflection in the others. Dibbs hastily took up Baedeker and affected to read; the man opposite simultaneously did the same. The tension was terrible; to remain inactive, almost impossible. Dibbs had an inspiration, as a man in extremity sometimes has. Though he was not armed, he would pretend to be. That might do something; produce hesitation or delay, at least. Accordingly he deliberately assumed a bold, even threatening demeanor. Casting a truculent glance across the carriage, he plucked his hand into his pocket, affecting to grasp an imaginary revolver. To his intense delight the ruse took immediate effect. The man opposite gave an unmistakable start, and shrank back into his corner. So far, so good. But how to keep up the pretense? What to do next? At this crisis the whistling of the engine suddenly distracted Dibbs. Good heavens! He had forgotten the long tunnel! They were coming to it now! His eyes, with a quick, involuntary movement, sought the lamp. It was not lighted. Entrapped! Doomed! The wildest thoughts rushed confusedly to his brain. With a shriek the train plunged noisily into the tunnel, into darkness. Every railway murder of which Dibbs had every read flashed before him with all the ghastly details. Absolute panic seized upon him; hardly knowing what he was doing, he tried softly to open the door. It was locked, however. His movements must have been heard; there was a stir at the other end of the carriage. The fatal moment had come; the assassin was advancing to the attack. In the extremity of his terror, Dibbs sank swiftly on the floor and crawled under his seat. For what length of time he crouched there, half stifled and scarcely daring to breathe, Dibbs knew not. Agony cannot measure time. A sudden and extraordinary rush of air made his heart first stand still, and then sent the blood coursing wildly through his veins. The far door was swinging open! Something had happened! And what? His straining ears had detected no sound but the outside rattle and roar of the train through the tunnel; within all was silent. He remained listening in intense excitement and amazement until the hope which had hardly dared to stir in his breast grew into vigorous life. He was alone in the carriage! He was saved! Deliverance had come miraculously—why and how, he knew not. The tunnel was coming to an end; light began to stream into the carriage. Cautiously and slowly Dibbs

peeped from under the seat. He was quite alone. The man had disappeared. At the station, just outside the tunnel, Dibbs—alighting almost before the train had stopped—changed his place for one in a crowded second-class compartment. A few hours later the brilliant was safely transferred from his charge into that of Goldsmith's brother at Lucerne. Dibbs' adventure made quite a sensation on his return to London. He was the hero of the hour in his circle. Whether or not he related the circumstances exactly as here set forth, need not be mentioned. His friend Bodkin, among others, gave a dinner party in his honor. Dibbs, with his usual punctuality, was the first of the guests to arrive. "By the way," Bodkin said, chaffingly, to him, as the two stood chatting together on the hearthrug, "you must look to your laurels to-night, Dibbs. Do you know Leroy, your neighbor in Harley street?" "Never saw the man in my life. What's the oke?" "A real adventure! In Switzerland, too, and culminating in a tunnel—not sure that it wasn't the Olden one, also." "Dear me! What an extraordinary coincidence!" "In his case it was a lunatic, not a robber. He was shadowed at hotels and in trains. You must hear the story from his own lips; he's dining here to-night. The climax is terrific. Shut into a railway carriage, alone with a lunatic, aforesaid lunatic armed with a revolver. A long tunnel, an extinguished lamp, the lunatic crawling in the darkness to the attack, an escape by the skin of the teeth. Leroy had sufficient presence of mind to open the door and pretend to get out, in reality crawling under the seat instead. The ruse saved his life. He supposes that he fainted in the stifling air, for when he was next conscious the train had left Olden and he was alone in the carriage, from which all traces of the lunatic had disappeared." "Bodkin was so engrossed in telling the story, he did not remark its curious and startling effect on Dibbs. Just then the door was thrown open, and the footman announced "Mr. Leroy." "Bodkin, springing forward with effusion to greet the new comer, led him gushing up to Dibbs. "You two must know each other," he said. "And they did. The recognition was instantaneous and complete. With a gasp, Dibbs stared at the less wonder on the man with the black whiskers, while Leroy started back a haught on encountering the gaze of the lunatic!—Yankee Blade. Names of Children. Down to the early part of the present century it was usual to name a child after the saint on whose day he happened to be born. A writer to Notes and Queries in 1834, states that he had recently baptized a child by the name of Benjamin Simon Jude. On his expressing some surprise at this somewhat singular conjunction of names, he was informed that the birth had taken place on the festival of St. Simon and Jude, and that it was always considered very unlucky to take the day from a child. The custom of naming children after any particular saint has fallen into general disuse, except in those countries where the population is composed almost entirely of Roman Catholics. The giving of a name in baptism is really an essential part of the rite, but is merely a custom, derived apparently from the Jews, and which through long practice has become an important element in the ceremony. Many instances might be furnished of children who have inadvertently received wrong names. The registers in Westminster Church contain the following entries: "1750, Jan. 17, Charles, daughter of John and Betty Haines. This child ought to have been christened Charlotte, but, owing to a mistake of the sponsors it was wrong named." "1761, July 31, William, daughter of William and Sarah Weldrick. N. B.—It was intended that this child, being a girl, should have been christened Maria, but through a mistake of the godfather it was named William."—The Westminster Review. The Compliment Chilled. There is an awfully bright woman, who has a great, good-natured and fairly good-looking husband who dotes upon her. So far as his personal attractions go he never gives them a thought, but she delights in giving him credit for being the most conceited mortal on the face of the earth. The other night she took two friends to the theatre—a mother and daughter—the former of whom has a great admiration for the husband in question. Business prevented his accompanying the trio, but he proposed to get to the theatre in time to escort the ladies home. The old lady looked around the house endeavoring to discover the young man, as the performance drew toward a close, but her search was unavailing. "No," she said when she gave it up, "he is not here, and I haven't seen a man as good-looking as he is here, either." This delighted the wife and when she reached home she told her husband, when he arrived a few minutes later. "That was very kind," he remarked, on hearing of the compliment; and he added, "Did Mrs. B.—'s daughter say the same thing?" "Oh, no," returned his spouse quickly, "she is younger than her mother, and has better eyesight."

IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

How the Nervous Young Man Finally Proposed to the Schoolteacher. Miss Isabel McCallion was a teacher in a public school. She had a young friend who was nervous and diffident. She knew that he was in love with her, but every time he started to propose he stammered and stuttered and became so embarrassed that she felt obliged to change the subject. The young man realized his failing and was much humiliated the evening after night he went to Miss McCallion's house determined to ask her if she would not consent to give up teaching school and become his wife and night after night he made a frost of the operation. One day last week he was passing along the street on which the school in which Miss McCallion teaches is situated, and he felt that if he could see the object of his adoration at that time he would have nerve enough to ask the momentous question. He thought the matter over and became firmly convinced that he was equal to the emergency. There was nothing to do then but the experiment, and he walked boldly into the school and asked to see Miss McCallion. The janitor escorted him to her room. She had a lot of youngsters in front of her, deep in the mysteries of decimals, when the young man came into the room. She came gracefully forward to meet him. He flushed a bit, but his tongue did not go back on him. "How do you do," she said with a charming smile, "to what am I indebted for the great pleasure of this visit?" The young man grasped her hand. "Miss McCallion—Isabel," he said, fervently, "I have called here this morning because I have something on which depends my happiness for all my future days. I want to ask—" "But," interrupted Miss McCallion, "if it is so important as that would it not be better if we were alone?" "Yes, but I beg of you not to turn a deaf ear to me because these children are here." Miss McCallion smiled again. Then she walked to the desk and rang a big gong three times. At the sound of it the children all rose and marched out of the room. "That," she said as she turned to the astonished young man, "is the fire drill. Now, if you hustle, you will have time to say what you want to say before they get back." And he had just received the consolation as the children came bounding through the hall on their return.—Buffalo Express. An Artist Porter. It would be interesting to know the history of many of the beautiful or strange faces which find their way onto artists' canvases, and become famous pictures. An amusing story is told of the way in which a well-known French artist secured a model for one of his finest paintings. He was extremely shabby and untidy in his dress one day as he walked slouchily along the street he heard a woman's voice behind him call out, "Here, my man, can you carry a bundle a little way for me?" The artist looked at the lady for a moment, and discovering that she had a most beautiful as well as singular face, he did not object that he was a gentleman, but said, "Willingly, madam," and followed her into a shop. The bundle was large and heavy, but he lifted it to his shoulder, and followed the lady along the street. At last she mounted to the second story of a house, with the tired porter close behind her, and began to fumble in her pocket for the money to pay him. "Pardon me," said the artist, courteously, "I am not a porter. I am an artist; and instead of money I will ask a favor of you, madam—to allow me to make a copy of your face." "The bundle was very heavy, and the compliment you paid to my dress was somewhat mortifying; but I shall consider myself well repaid if I may send a portrait of you to the next exhibition of the academy." The favor was granted after some hesitation, and in this way the artist came by the subject for one of the most exquisite pictures ever painted by his brush. It is said, however, whether true or not, that from the day on which this little episode occurred, dated a decided improvement in his personal appearance and dress, and he never again figured on the street as a porter.—Youth's Companion. A Rare Stone. Among the numerous costly presents given to the Duke of York from the Indian Rajahs was a beautiful stone. The bezel, bezel, or bezel was a stone procured from the kidneys of the cervicaria, an animal partly deer and partly goat, found in Arabia. This stone was supposed to have been formed of the poison of a serpent which had bitten her produce. In the middle ages it was believed to be a potent charm against plague and poison. The Persians call it Pad zahr or Bad-zahr—expelling poison. The Duchess of Edinburgh and her brother, the Czar of Russia, each possess a bezel. That belonging to the latter belonged to the Emperor Charles V. and is mentioned in the inventory after his death at Susti thus: "A box of black leather lined with crimson velvet containing four bezel stones variously set in gold"—one of which he bequeathed to his gentleman of the Chamber to cure him of the plague.—Public Ledger. THE greatest trial in the world is to have a trouble on your mind and a guest on your hands at the same time. AIR is a poor thing to raise the wind on.