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 book maker at the races not only does his best, but he most always does his betters.

OF all things in the world that are "better late than never," going to bed certainly ranks first.

UNFORTUNATELY, a man's funeral sermon comes too late to live up to, says the Syracuse Courier.

IF Boston really wants a fresh and never-failing water supply why wouldn't it be a good idea to tap the Western Union stock?

THE man who refuses to live in the country because there is "so little going on" there, has inside his own head a place where there is still less going on.

NOT every woman can dress well with the most reckless expenditure; but a clever woman can dress well with intelligent economy and an artistic taste.

THE Chicago man who offers to give piano lessons for 25 cents will be wise if he has his life insured before betraying his identy in any flat building.

THE man who does not complain, makes more friends than the man who always has a grievance. The dead martyr is the only kind that is ever canonized.

AS WE are bound not to inflict unnecessary suffering on animals, so are we obliged to avert all that tends to add to the sorrow and trials of our common humanity.

LYDIA E. GAUL is reported to have relinquished all claims to the estate of Robert Kay Hamilton in consideration of the sum of $10,000. There is something in a name after all.

ACTRESS MINNIE SELIGMAN-CUTTING argued her own case in a New York court the other day, and that she did not have a fool for a client is evidenced by the fact that the jury returned a verdict in her favor.

WHEN you make a mistake don't look back at it long. Take the reason of the thing into your own mind, and then look forward. Mistakes are lessons of wisdom. They cannot be changed. The future is yet in your power.

THE New York contemporary who has been admonishing girls never to let their lovers kiss them under a lamp-post is all right. The lovers ought to know better than to try and kiss them anywhere except under the nose.

IN her last poem Ella Wheeler Wilcox declares she has reached the high noon of life. As the soulful Ella is less than one year this side of the half-century mark it would be interesting to know how old she was at the sunrise of her existence.

MAIL matter dropped in a box in Paris is delivered in Berlin within an hour and a half, and sometimes within thirty-five minutes. It is sent by means of pneumatic tubes. The excellent postal service of this country has considerable to learn from the service of Europe.

A COURSE of lectures at the Royal Institution which has created so much interest is that by Capt. Abney on "Color Blindness." Excessive tobacco smoking has long been known to be an important factor in color blindness, and Capt. Abney indorses the truth of this observation, says the Scientific American.

THE discovery of the process of drying fruit has been a great blessing to fruit growers and consumers, and for the farmer has resulted in many dollars saved which must have been lost in the days when fruit was only sold in the fresh state. When it sells at too little to pay for picking it would be money saved to dry the fruit and sell it in that state.

THE first thousand dollars generally comes hard and requires close figuring and considerable deprivation, but as a rule the thousands that come long after any are needed are chased more eagerly and greedily than the first. If people with capacity for making money do not learn to judiciously enjoy it as they go along they never will.

THE chances that an accident insurance company takes when it sells a policy good for twenty-four hours to a casual traveler may be estimated when it is known that the Interstate Commerce Commission has figured out that one person is killed by railroad accidents for [illegible] people who ride from [illegible] miles. [illegible]

ICES on these figures looks like a "sure thing" for the accident companies.

SOME idea of the rapidity of the motion of the earth, which we neither see or feel, may be formed by comparison. A rifle ball rarely can be made to move more rapidly than 2,000 feet per second. But the earth's surface at the equator moves about 81,500 feet per second, in its motion of daily revolution, while the whole earth moves through space in its revolution about the sun at the rate of over 95,000 feet per second, or nearly fifty times as rapidly as a rifle ball.

SCIENCE says now that beauty is not skin deep. She can tell you that half the charm of a pretty face—at least the expression—is a matter of little muscles and a complex labyrinth of nerves, and that the curves of the lips, the glance of the eyes, droop of their lids, are a matter of the prevalent use of certain small muscles in obedience to a prevalent aspect of the mind. Moreover, that the use of these organs of expression has come down long ancestral lines, and that the mold of the features themselves is a question of heredity.

IT appears to be taken for granted by a great many people, says the Outlook, that reformers have a right to exaggerate, and that the only way to attract public attention to evils of various kinds is to throw them into very bold relief. This is what is always said in defence of the exaggerated statements sometimes put forth by zealous and earnest men in behalf of the causes for which they are pleading. But exaggeration is essentially vicious because it is essentially untrue, and, being untrue, it is likely to injure by reaction the cause in the interest of which it is used.

THE State of Iowa, says the American Cultivator, has made an excellent addition to its game laws by prohibiting that no one shall hunt with dog or gun on cultivated or enclosed fields without obtaining permission of their owners. This is such a law as every State should have. Game laws are usually dictated by sporting men and wholly in their own interest. There are some property rights of farmers that deserve to be respected. Neither dog nor gun pays any appreciable tax to the State but the land is taxed regularly so long as the assessors make their rounds. If farmers are expected to pay taxes they should have their crops and land exempt from incursions by sporting men of all classes, who are not generally very careful about destroying property.

THE reason the Sicilian farmers live in villages instead of on the farms they till is found in a curious survival of a mediæval law. Under that law tillers are not allowed to live upon the lands they farmed, but were huddled together in villages, possibly so they could thereby be more easily watched and kept from insurrection. Sicilian farmers have maintained the ancient system from choice apparently. Mediæval customs are found in Sicily more frequently than in any other part of Europe. The octroi itself would not have been submitted to so long if the Sicilian peasants had been as intelligent as the rural population elsewhere. By the mediæval custom under which the octroi was levied cities imposed a tax on all food products brought into their gates. This tax went not to the national government, but to defraying the expenses of the city government itself. It imposes a double tax on the wretched peasant. He pays taxes on the land outside the city. Then when he brings food for his own use to his home in the village he is met at the city line by the octroi collector, who levies on every bushel of potatoes the farmer consumes in his own family. Worst of all, the collectors are bribed by the rich, it is said, to let them off comparatively free, and pluck the poor who cannot help themselves. On the whole, it is no wonder the Sicilians revolted.

A Snake Mountain.

There is a horseshoe-shaped mountain in Manitoba which literally swarms with snakes twice every year. In the early autumn those slippery customers gather there from all directions, mostly from the prairie country of the south. In one side of the mountain there is a circular hole about fifteen feet deep, and as smooth as if it had been fashioned with a well auger, where tens of thousands of reptiles spend the cold winter months together. Persons who have tried to explore this immense snake den during the summer, when the regular tenants are absent, say that dozens of subterranean passages lead out under the mountain in all directions from the bottom of the well. An authority estimates that he has seen 300,000 snakes of all sizes knotted together and piled up in a semi-torpid state in this "Well of Serpents," as it is called in the Northwest.

One hand opened in charity may be worth ten linked in prayer.

THE CHILDREN.

Only to keep them so,
Soft, warm and young,
The wee, feeble fingers,
The babbling tongues,
Years that we fling away,
Be free that we win;
Cumbers of knowledge,
As guilticst of sin.

Only to keep them so,
Frank, pure and true;
Of our full wisdom
Too lovingly sure,
Our frown all they shrink from,
Our law their law;
Our store whence all gladness
They fearlessly draw.

Only to keep them so,
Sweet hands that cling,
Sweet lips that laugh for us,
Sweet tones that ring;
Curls that we train to wave
Feet that we guide,
Each fresh step a wonder,
Each new word a pride.

A RACE WITH DEATH.

"That is not true—not true at all. I gave you no encouragement," cried Milly, hotly. "I couldn't have given you any, because I am engaged."

"Engaged! What! To that engineer fellow?"

"That is no concern of yours. I have given you neither right nor reason to question me about it, or to—to insult me, as you've just done," she faltered.

Her father, for his father's sake had shown this Bastable much kindness since his coming to Worston, and Milly had been as peasant to him as she was to everyone. Her winning manner he had taken for encouragement, and had had the audacity tonight, upon meeting her in a lonely lane where she expected her fiance, to snatch a kiss.

"You're an arrant little flirt, and have ruined my life," he cried thickly, seizing her in his arms.

Hardly had he done so when he was wrenched aside, and thrashed with a stout stick so furiously, that the blows fell like rain without number and without direction on all parts of the head, face, and body. The young engineer laid his blows on with such fierce force that Bastable's body was a mere mass of bruises before Milly could hold her lover's arm. He flung the fellow from him to the ground, a little ashamed of the assault upon a man physically so much his inferior as Bastable.

He had walked many steps away with Milly before Bastable raised himself to a sitting posture, at the moment that Milly was looking round anxiously in the fear that he was seriously injured.

"You villian!" he yelled. "You'll pay for this! Both of you! Both of you. Both of you!" he reiterated, with such concentrated malignity in his face and voice as made Milly shudder.

For days and days after, she was haunted by the remembrance of the hate in his face, and with the horror of the revenge upon her lover it portended. And this she did well to dread. Bastable, a vindictive brute naturally, had received such punishment under such circumstances as might have fired the meekest of men to revenge. He really loved Milly Harman with all the love which his gross soul was capable, and to be thrashed by his successful rival under her eyes, and deservedly thrashed, while in the act of a dastardly assault upon her, was an injury and an ignominy to be wiped out only with blood. He brooded upon his love, his hate, his jealousy, and his revenge, till you might rather say these passions possessed him than that he possessed them.

Another passion also, which fed all these—the passion for drink—now mastered him so entirely that he was hardly ever sober.

Well, therefore, might Milly dread a demoniac so possessed with a monomania of revenge; and this dread made her consent to an immediate marriage with Arthur Munro, who could not otherwise be persuaded to quit Worston. He would return to his home only if she returned with him as his bride.

Accordingly the wedding was not only hastened, but kept secret, and the wedding itself was kept strictly private in deference to Milly's dread of Bastable's vengeance upon her lover. And her precautions would probably have precluded all she feared, but for the merest accident. The carriage with the bride and bridegroom in it drove up to the station at the very moment Bastable was in the act of quitting it.

Seeing the luggage labeled "Leigh," whithe they were bound on their honeymoon, he asked the coachman, when they had entered the station.—

"A wedding?"

"Something of the sort," the man answered grufflly, as he turned his horses round.

Meanwhile Milly cried, clinging to Arthur's arm almost convulsively,—

"Oh, Arthur! He—he has heard of it! He's here! I saw him."

"Who, dear?"

"Mr. Bastable."

"Milly darling, you've got that brute on the brain! What can he do here at mid-day in a crowded station?"

Turning to a porter, he asked,—

"Which is our train?"

"She's there in the siding, sir; she'll back up when the local's gone."

"Let me put you into a carriage, dear, while I look after the luggage."

So saying, he hurried her to a carriage near the engine, and got in with her to dispose of the wraps and other light articles on the seat and in the rack.

At this moment Bastable, who had dogged them to the carriage, passed its doors unseen and walked on toward the end of the platform, gnashing his teeth with the impotent fury of a caged wild beast. If only he had at that moment the revolver he had bought to shoot this man with, he could do it now; but in a few minutes more Munro would be carried beyond the reach of his revenge, taking her with him as his bride.

Here he stopped opposite the express engine, and stood staring at it without seeing it, his nostrils distended, his lips parted, his teeth clenched, the nails of his hands buried in the palms, while his eyes glared with the lurid light of madness. He was brought a little to himself by being forced to step aside to allow the stoker to get off his engine in order to follow the driver into the refreshment bar for a glass. This called his attention to the circumstances that the engine of the train into which, as yet, only the hatred bride and groom had got, was utterly deserted.

"By George! that'll do it!" he almost shouted, and without looking around even to see if he were observed, he jumped on the engine, opened the regulator to the full, and as she bounded forward leaped off at the other side.

As Arthus Munro had quitted the carriage to look after the luggage, the only soul in the runaway train was poor Milly. Munro had not left the train a minute when loud shouts of alarm arrested him.

"What is it? What's the matter?" he asked, facing round with a horrible suspicion that Bastable had attacked Milly.

"The express has run away!" exclaimed one porter.

"Good heavens! She'll be into the Bingham train at Lifford!" cried another.

Milly was alone in the train, and yet Munro did not lose his presence of mind. Flying to the end of the platform, he jumped upon the engine of the local, and without a word to driver or stoker put his hand out and seized the regulator. Before he could open it the driver stopped him.

"Hold on, sir! Hold on! Bill, unhook the train!"

In a minute Bill had leaped down, unhooked the engine from the train, and was back again on the engine plate just as she began to glide out of the station.

"Express!" shouted the driver, pointing ahead to the runaway. "Couldn't catch her up with a load like that on," chucking his thumb behind toward the train they had been detached from by Bill.

But they lost nearly as much time by the stoppage to unhook the train as they gained by the lightening of the load, for the runaway had got almost a mile's start by the delay.

"How far is Lifford?" shouted Munro, frantically.

"Six miles."

"My wife! My wife!" he moaned in blank despair.

Then, wrenching the shovel from the stoker he proceeded to feed the furnace, with all an expert's skill—flinging the coal far in and well to the sides. Every other moment he straightened himself to look ahead; but though the engine was going now at a rate that made it rock and pitch violently like a boat in breakers, they had not sighted the runaway yet. Suddenly she slowed down from seventy to fifty miles an hour, and Munro, looking up, saw the steam shut off.

"What? Why?" he cried.

"Lifford distance," replied the driver, pointing to the signal. "All up by this! We should only pile up the smash now."

Then Munro lost all heart and hope, and sank in a heap on the engine plate, hiding his face with his hands. Meanwhile, the driver, by putting the brake so hard on that the wheels of the engine glowed red, had nearly got her under control as he swept around the curve and came in sight of the station.

All clear! A wire from Worston had got the Bingham train into a siding only just in time. As they glided past the platform the station master shouted,—

"They have wired to Bentham to switch her into stop blocks at that siding."

That was, of course, to wreck the train against the block.

Munro heard, and, starting up like a madman, he wrenched open the regulator to the full, shouting only,—

"My wife! My wife!"

It was all he could articulate for the moment. Presently, when they had got again into swing, he cried,—

"My wife is in the carriage next the engine."

"There's Bentham Bank," shouted back the driver, encouragingly.

Bentham Bank being a steep gradient of one in forty-eight, where the seven-foot driving wheels of the express would need a driver's skilful coaxing and sanding to keep them from slipping at every other revolution.

"By heavens, we'll do it if she keeps the rails!" shouted the driver, as they shot through a tunnel like a bullet through its rifle barrel.

All three men were now on the lookout, since nothing more could be done that driving or stoking could do. In less than a minute they would sight Bentham Bank, and, if the runaway had topped it, she would be matchwood in two minutes. The incline at the other side was nearly as steep as the ascent at this, and to go down it with a load under a full head of steam meant a pace of ninety miles an hour into the siding and against the stop-blocks at the bottom.

"I told you" shouted the driver, excitedly, as they sighted the runaway half up the bank before them.

But Munro did not hear him. He was already at the smoke-box of the rocking, reeling engine, having run along its boiler holding on by the rail.

"Steady, sir, steady! We're into her!" and, indeed, they struck the runaway with the smart shock of a mild collision.

The driver hurried after Munro, and gave him a steadying hand across the touching buffers of the engine and train, and then, as Munro put the brake hard on in the guard's van, the driver stooped and managed, with wonderful coolness and handiness, to hook on the engine to the runaway.

"Reverse her, Bill!" he shouted to the stoker.

Meanwhile, Munro, walking along the footboards, and holding on by the hand-rails, passed the carriage in which his bride was.

"Oh, Arthur," she cried, when she saw him, "I got such a fright. I thought you were left behind."

He broke into a scream of almost hysterical laughter as he hurried on to the runaway engine. There was little difficulty or danger in getting on to it or in shutting off the steam now, since the train began to feel the backward pull of the reversed engine behind; and Milly was saved.

"I thought you had gone mad. What made you laugh like that, Arthur?" she asked.

"At your being driver, stoker, guard and passengers of the express—without knowing it; and also, I suppose in the reaction from the most horrible half hour of my life—on my wedding day. It was that brute's doing," he added, more to himself than to her, "and he'll get ten years for it."

As a matter of fact, Bastable got a tenth of that punishment—about a seventh of what he'd have got had he forged a bill.—Waverly Magazine.

DR. GATLING'S PREDICTION.

An Enormous Revolution in Warfare by the Use of Smokeless Powder.

The famous Dr. R. J. Gatling, the inventor of the wonderful machine gun that bears his name, is fond of Washington, says the Post, and was glad of the opportunity given him to spend a month at the capital by reason of the tests of his and other guns now in progress at Indian Head. The doctor carries his threescore and odd years well. He is a large man, white-haired, like a patriarch, and with an air of good will toward all mankind. He is never so happy as when talking about modern engines of destruction, which he believes are the greatest agencies for keeping the peace.

"People are not yet educated to appreciate the enormous revolution in future warfare caused by the invention of smokeless powder," said he. "Already it has made obsolete between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 of muskets in Europe that were built to shoot black powder, not to speak of the millions of cartridges, all of which the countries possessing would be willing to sell for a song. Here is a vast sum of wasted capital, but it is the inevitable result of progress. Our army guns in this country will soon be in the obsolete category, for to keep pace with the rest of the world we will have to adopt smokeless powder too. A gun loaded with it will send a bullet just twice as far as the black powder does. Again the new invention changes military tactics entirely, for in the battles of the future troops will never display themselves en masse to the enemy. Open fighting, as has been customary through all the ages, is a thing of the past, for it would mean utter annihilation. If smokeless powder has been in use during the late civil strife the war between the States wouldn't have lasted ninety days.

"What is the difference between a rapid firing gun and a machine gun?"

"A rapid firing gun doesn't begin to fire with the rapidity of a machine gun. The former is usually of one barrel and is loaded with shells. It is a great gun for torpedo boats, but fifteen times to the minute is pretty good time for one of them. A machine gun of the Gatling type has from six to twelve barrels and with three men to operate, practically never ceases firing, one volley succeeding another at a speed of 1,200 discharges per minute. These three men can do more killing than a whole brigade armed with old-fashioned muskets. It is a machine gun, along with the smokeless powder, that is going to make war an impossibility."

A Wonderful Instrument.

The meteorological instrument lately come into use, and known as the rain and snow weighing gauge, has the wonderful capacity of weighing out rain or snow in quantities representing the one-thousandth of an inch precipitation, registering each small fraction separately. The apparatus consists of two parts, the weighing gauge and the recorder, or register, so that the greatest possible accuracy is obtainable in the observations of the weather bureau. The first part is, of course, on the roof of the observatory, and is connected with the recorder by means of three electric wires, one of which is open and a few cells of electric battery inserted. The receiving vessel into which the precipitation falls and is retained rests upon ordinary weighing scales, so made that the equilibrium of the balance, whenever disturbed—as by the fall into the receptacle of small particles of water—is immediately restored by the automatic movement of a sliding weight along the balance beam, a corresponding movement taking place in the register pen of the observatory. The fall of water into the receiver depresses the beam, causing electrical contact to be made with a spring and sending a current through the magnet on the balance, the action of which moves the counterweight and also sends the current through the magnet on the register, thus actuating the recording pen. This extremely delicate instrument is said to work to perfection.—New York Sun.

Forced to Confess.

A curious point in Swedish criminal law is that confession is necessary before a capital sentence can be carried out. If, however, the culprit persists in protesting his innocence in the face of overpowering evidence the prison discipline is made extremely severe, so as to extort the desired confession.

NAPOLEON AT AUSTERLITZ.

Incidents of the Great "Battle of the Emperors" and Its Results.

The story of how the great Napoleon met and conquered the very flower of the armies of the allied nations of the world, there arrayed against the Frenchmen, is a pretty story—in fact, is not a story at all, but a matter of history. Those who have read history or the life of Napoleon will remember that his motto was punctual and implicit obedience to orders. With Napoleon 5 o'clock meant 5 o'clock or before, not five minutes or one minute after. One incident will be found in Napoleon's career where he punished a favorite General, after having publicly reprimanded him for appearing at a certain bridge some ten minutes later than he had been ordered to appear there by his superior officer. The General offered as an excuse that the weather was rigorous, but Napoleon impetuously interfered with a remark: "Not too rigorous for me to be here on time."

The French troops had implicit confidence in their leader. The night before the great battle of Austerlitz the men sang patriotic songs until cautioned that they were within earshot of the enemy and must be silent, but sometime later, when just before retiring to his tent for the night—though it is said that Napoleon did not sleep—that great General passed among his warriors outstretched on the ground. Suddenly one enthusiastic soldier fastened his little pallet of straw on his bayonet, fired it and tossed it in the air. Others followed and the flames lit up the entire country surrounding, carrying to the enemy the news that the Frenchmen were near. Such action was decidedly unjudicious, it is true, but it showed the wonderful faith and confidence the soldiers had in their General, whom they fairly worshipped, and at whose command they would face without flinching what, at least, appeared to be certain death.

The battle began at an early hour in the morning. Napoleon saw before him more than 200,000 of the very flower of the army of Russia, Austria, Germany, England and other nations, while he had a scurvy 75,000 scarred, worried and not too well fed or clothed soldiers with which to face the seemingly overwhelming, better cared for allied army of 200,000 tried men, and yet Napoleon won and all the nations marveled the eat, though it is now a matter of history that he should have won for the reason that his plans were successfully carried out, because of the implicit confidence of his soldiers and their prompt obedience to each order issued.

Some of Napoleon's generals differed with the greatest of all generals' orders, but they did not stop to question and carried out their instructions to the letter. Napoleon threw his entire army of 75,000 men first on the right wing, then on the left, then on the center. Several times the enemy was flanked without knowing how the trick had been accomplished, but, turn as they might, the allies found confronting them 65,000 men in a compact mass while to save themselves the generals of the allied army could not swing their 200,000 into such position as to face Napoleon's army at the same time. That was the very trick Napoleon wanted to play. While there were 200,000 men arrayed against him, he was fighting about one-fourth that number with a superior force behind him. True, upon each maneuver he faced fresh men, but never more men than he threw against that particular part of the allied armies.

He won because there was organization, and the men who did the fighting asked no questions as to the wisdom of this or that order, but simply knew that the ultimate result to be achieved was defeat of their enemy, and, being properly organized and disciplined, they accomplished the result aimed at.

She Deserved to Lose It.

A bareheaded blonde rushed out the carriage entrance yesterday and looked wildly about; then, dashing along for a hundred yards, she stopped and touched a woman who had a child by the hand upon the shoulder.

"Did you just come out of that store?" she asked.

"Yes," the woman answered tartly.

"What department were you in?"

The woman started and jerked the child, who was restless.

"I mean," said the breathless blonde, what were you buying?"

"Handkerchiefs!" snapped the shopper, shortly. "What's that to you?"

"Why," said the saleslady, "I think you left some of your money," and she held up a bill.

"Well, for goodness sake, why didn't you tell me before I got out of the store?" demanded the owner of the wealth, and she took possession of her cash and started off without a thank you.

The pretty money finder looked at me and blurted out. "Well, did you ever?"

I assured her I never had.

"Why," she continued, "it wasn't her change, you know. She was taking her pocketbook out of her bag and she drew the bill with it. I was not waiting upon her, but I happened to notice it, and flew after her as fast as I could.

"I tell you we have an awful lot to put up with. You never know until you get behind a counter how many strange and unreasonable people there are in the world. I got a breath of fresh air, anyway," said she, and smilingly went back to the shop.—Chicago Journal.

EVEN an angel in a white dress and blue sash looks a little greasy this hot weather.