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TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

Papa Vanderbik ought to be proud of his boy's pluck, whatever he thinks of his judgment.

A man's honest earnest opinion is the most precious of all he possesses; let him communicate this if he is to communicate anything.

Mark the **Czar's** modesty in refusing to publish either the date of his visit to the Kaiser or the route he will take. Few of our great men are so unobtrusive as this.

Mrs. Leslie Carter testified that she used to walk with Mr. Fairbank and Mr. Fairbank went upon the witness stand and indignantly declared that he "did no such thing." Well, then, what was it made him so dizzy?

Without the resolution in your heart to do good work, so long as your right hand has motion in it, and to do it, whether the issue be that you die or live, no life worthy the name will ever be possible to you; while in once forming the resolution that your work shall be well done life is really won here and forever.

Compressed air as a means of street car locomotion seems to be a distinct success if one may judge from the experiment tried in New York. Street car traffic will not be at once revolutionized by the establishment of this invention, but it will probably present economical advantages which will appeal to the builders of new lines.

A large, adult, morose bull held possession of Central Park in New York for a good part of Sunday against all comers, treading the populace and chasing bicyclers. If the people of Gotham would abandon their practice of cutting the grass in the streets before it is fairly ripe they would leave fewer inducements for wild cattle to disturb their pleasure grounds.

The universal admission that men are not as good as as well as as noble as they might be is of itself a proof that all have ideals beckoning and helping them onward. No one deliberately upholds wrong-doing, however much he may commit it; no one condemns right conduct, however much he may neglect it. Men's ideals are better than their actions, but not better than themselves, for they are a true and vital part of themselves. "The thing we long for, that we are, for one transcendent moment." Could we be born of our ideals character would rapidly sink and life would show a sorrowful record.

In spite of the depression of the times and a continued longing for a restoration of confidence the claim department of the city of Duluth shows a continually increasing activity. The State census of 1895 put the population at 59,396, but we are now informed on the authority of the hack-drivers that the place contains 70,000 inhabitants. It has more than doubled since 1890, and it is only a question of time when it will become the metropolis of the western continent. How bright, chipper and cheerful this sounds; how full of hopeful augury! It is the first thing to disturb the dreary monotony of woe that has been upon us for the last four years. It is admirable, inspiring, worthy of emulation. It should rouse the drooping spirits of Kansas City, Omaha, Denver, Tacoma, and Seattle, and start anew their generous rivalry. And as it is generally admitted that times, whether hard or good, are largely the product of sentiment, who knows but that with a return of the boastful mood of old we should soon be launched upon the full tide of prosperity again?

Chicago Post: After all, they do some things better in the country than in the city. They may be rather slow in certain directions, and they may be a little too ready to purchase gold bricks at times; but when it comes to discouraging crime they display an enthusiasm that is worthy of emulation by the professional thief-catchers of the city. There is the case of those four safe-blowers at Greeley, Iowa, for instance. They'll know enough to stick to the cities after this—that is, provided they recover from their wounds and ever get out of jail again. They are probably more accustomed to city methods, anyway, and it was something of a surprise for people to get on their trail with pitchforks and shot-guns, as was described by the Times-Herald, instead of waiting for the detectives and the police to wrestle with an assortment of clues. It is possible that we have too much excitement in the city to make any such joyful and spontaneous action on the part of our leading citizens possible. But, if so, we are the sufferers. We are accustomed to hearing of burglaries, and, when informed of one, merely wonder what the police are doing, and then go on about our private business, instead of taking down the old shotgun from its place over the mantel and entering in a gen-

eral round-up of every suspicious character within a radius of twenty miles. After what has happened we are of the opinion that Greeley will not be disturbed by burglars again for a long, long time. They will know enough to keep close to the cities, where there are professional policemen and detectives, but not so many enthusiastic amateurs.

The great Standard Oil Company is destined to lose its grip upon the petroleum trade of the world, and also to suffer a large decline in the volume of its business. The supply of petroleum in the depths of the earth is widely distributed, and rich oil fields exist which when discovered and developed will have an influence on the petroleum trade of the world. The Standard Oil Company's latest competitor is the Sumatra oil region, which is now under process of development. It is said to be very rich, and an oil refiner of Titusville, Pennsylvania, who has been engaged to establish the refinery plants in Sumatra, predicts that within the next five years Japan will turn from the United States to Sumatra for her entire supply of petroleum. The magnitude of this loss to the American petroleum trade will be understood from the fact that Japan last year purchased no less than 30,000,000 gallons of oil from the United States. The oil fields of Sumatra are located on a navigable river which permits vessels from Singapore, Peking, Yokohama, and East India ports to load at the refineries situated on the river bank. This is a great advantage, as it reduces the cost of transportation. Here the refined petroleum is carried by rail and by pipe-lines, and although the cost of transportation has been reduced to a minimum it is of necessity higher than it can possibly be in Sumatra, where the oil steamers can go directly to the docks at the refineries, and have their cargoes placed on board in barrels, or sent in bulk into tanks in the hold.

The frightful railroad disaster on the West Jersey Railroad, near Atlantic City, was not only the most fatal one of the present year, but one of the most fatal for many years past. The present year, indeed, has been remarkably free from railroad accidents which can be called severe. But one such has occurred, the collision on the Northwestern Road near Omaha July 11, when twenty-eight persons were killed and fifty-six injured. In addition to this there have been three lesser disasters, involving an aggregate of seventeen persons killed and eight injured. The latest reports from the East set the number of killed at forty-two and injured at forty-three. Out of eighteen memorable disasters which have occurred since 1853 but nine have exceeded this record, the worst of these being that at Ashtabula, Ohio, Dec. 29, 1876, when eighty were killed and sixty injured by the breaking of a bridge and the wrecking of a Pacific express train. From the description of the accident it appears that the West Jersey train was returning from Atlantic City with 1,250 excursionists from South Jersey cities, who had spent the day at the seaside. It left half an hour behind time, but as the lights near the junction with the Reading Road indicated a clear track the engineer put on a full head of steam to make up some of the lost time. Meanwhile the Reading train which left Philadelphia at 5:40 and was due at Atlantic City at 6:50 was running on schedule time to the sea, having the right of way. The operator in the switch tower hoisted the danger signal, but without heeding it the engineer of the Reading train kept on his way with undiminished speed, and ran squarely into the other train at the crossing, with the horrible results already stated. Why he failed to slacken his speed and obey the warning of the switch operator will never be known, as both the fireman and himself were buried in the ruins of their engine. It was a terrible ending of a day of pleasure for the excursionists. In the first passenger car of the excursion train not a single passenger of the sixty escaped death or injuries which may result in death. It has brought mourning into scores of homes. It adds to the horror of the disaster and the painfulness of subsequent memories that it might have been avoided if the engineer of the Reading train had been ordinarily watchful and heeded the warnings of the switch operator.

Piqued at Thackeray.
Thackeray got into trouble by copying some of his characters too closely from life, notably when he put his friend, Arthur Archdeke, into "Pendennis" as the ever delightful Harry Foker. Although Thackeray meant no unkindness, Archdeke never quite forgave him. One night, just after Thackeray had delivered his first lecture on "The English Humorists," Archdeke met him at the Older Cellar Club, surrounded by a coterie who were offering their congratulations. "How are you, Thack?" cried Archie; "I was at your show-to-day at Willis'. What a lot of swells you had there—yes! But I thought it was dull—devilish dull! I will tell you what it is, Thack, you want a piano."

The devil is not so popular now as he formerly was; people are finding out that the devil sets too much interest.

THE WRATH OF CUPID.

When Venus roamed Olympus' heights,
In radiant, heavenly beauty,
And sought to set all things right
By acts of love and duty,
She found her Cupid weeping sore,
His bow and arrows broken,
And thus did he his griefs deplore,
And legends told in tones:

"I sought to win a blondest maid—
She fled and went to voting;
A ballot on my bow she laid,
Her virgin scorn denoting.
I begged her kisses—she cried 'Nay,'
And said I was a bear if
I joined not in the Hoecake fray,
And fought not 'gainst the tariff."

"Again I found a lovely lass,
She was a platform preacher;
A gentler creed I dreamed, alas!
That I could erudite teach her,
She tried not my torture,
I found no way to fault her,
With texts she did my transports douse,
My bow broke on her altar."

"When next I sieged a maiden's heart,
And wooed her toward compliance,
She nipped the point from off my dart,
Because she'd studied science.
And when I sang an amorous lay
Of Venus and Apollo,
She turned on me a Roentgen ray
And said my heart was hollow."

"At last I met a cycling girl,
In bloomers she was riding—
The chemist art made good each curl;
Her native beauty hiding.
She had no use for ardent ways,
She pitied not my torture,
But said she might Love's ante raise
If I'd become a scorcher."

Then Venus fair embraced the lad,
And bade him calm his sorrow,
Nor worry 'er each earth-maid's fad,
But hope success to-morrow.
"Dear child," she said, "you must not cry,
These fads they work ne'er covers;
For bloomers never reach too high
To hide the hearts of lovers."
—Life.

SMUGGLER'S LAST RUN.

On the wild promontory of Portland, a little to the west of the famous "Bill," a rude stone dwelling was dovetailed into a chasm that broke the scarp of the cliff some thirty feet below the brink. Ingress and egress on the landward side could only be had through a trap-door on the roof; but, as much of the traffic to that house came from the sea, there was also a door in the side flush with the cliff-face, from which anyone stepping would have fallen sheer on to the rocks below. This difficulty, however, was obviated by the dropping of a rope ladder when occasion required.

The almost impregnable citadel formed the lair of Steve Kern, the most daring of all smugglers who, 100 years ago, burrowed and nested in the "Island."

Every revenue cutter and preventive man, from the Start to Dover, knew Steve for a smuggler; but it was his proud boast that not one of them had been able to catch him in the act of running a cargo or disposing of his goods, and to this he owed his immunity.

On a November evening in 1894 the large kitchen, used also as the general living room of the queer roost, was occupied by three persons—an elderly woman, a dark, well-dressed, youngish man of rather foreign appearance, and a beautiful girl of 18.

The elderly dame was Mrs. Kern, the girl was her daughter Margery, and the man was Pierre Roublot, the French brandy merchant of Fecamp, whose extensive dealings with Kern necessitated frequent visits to this side of the water. At least this was the Frenchman's explanation, though old Kern had long suspected that Margery's bright eyes turned the real attraction.

The brandy merchant had arrived in Kern's lugger the night before for a three days' stay, and he had just taken the opportunity of the smuggler's temporary absence, and of Mrs. Kern's deafness, to make the girl a formal proposal of marriage.

But Margery shrank away from the hand that sought hers. I am sorry, M. Roublot, but I cannot listen to you," she replied, speaking in very good French, which she had learned from her mother. Mrs. Kern had been a Bretonne peasant girl.

"And why not?" persisted Roublot, a scowl darkening his swarthy face. "I am rich, I am not old or ill-looking, and I—"

"Spare me a catalogue of your virtues," said Margery. "You may be all that and much more, but the reason why I cannot wed you is that I do not love you. Besides—"

"What was that? Where is Cap'n Kern?" he asked.

"Oh, Dick," cried Margery, "something has happened to father, I fear." Dick Langston seized a pistol from a well-filled rack and ran to the door, through which the moon was visible sailing over the heaving sea. But before he reached the ladder, the face of one ascending appeared over the door sill, and the master of the house sprang nimbly into the room—a miracle of activity despite his gigantic frame and 60 years.

"It's all right; there's no call to fright yourselves," he said, as the women clustered round him. "I biased off my pistols to try if the powder was wet. Here, Margery; just roll this keg into the storeroom with the rest."

As soon as Margery was out of hearing Kern drew the two men aside and said: "That was a narrow shave; I've never been so near took before. I had to bite as well as bark to save myself. There's a man dead below."

"Were there more than one?" asked Dick Langston.

"No, there was only one. It was that new Scotch preventive from Fortune's Well—Sandy McIntyre his name is. He must have crept along the rocks under the cliffs at low water and hidden himself."

"Ah, mon Dieu! But you are unhurt, my friend?" exclaimed Roublot.

"Yes, he missed me by a hair's breadth, but he was sighting me with a second pistol, so I let him have a chunk of lead from mine and he rolled over, as dead as a rabbit, into a pool. If he's let hide here the tide will like as not wash him right into Waymouth Bay. Go down, Dick, my lad, and roll some rocks atop of him."

The young man disappeared into the black gulf below. No sooner was he gone than Kern filled himself a stiff nobby of brandy and drank it at a gulp.

"That's better," he said. "I wouldn't ever do for my mate to see as I was a bit shook by this. You may believe it or not as you like, M. Roublot, but for all folks do say of me, this is the first time as I've took a man's life."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Frenchman. "Why, your reputation on both sides the channels of the most bloodthirsty."

A faint smile fluttered over the old smuggler's rugged countenance. "I took care it should be," he said. "But it was, as you call it, all reputation—worked up for my own safety. I should not have done it now, but that the sneak would have shot me else."

"You surprise me, mon ami," replied Roublot, thoughtfully. "But come, let us change the subject. I have laid bare my heart to mademoiselle, your daughter, and she rejects my love. She has the soft feeling, I am sure, for Dick Langston, your mate."

Kern frowned, as though ill-pleased, but his brow quickly cleared.

"I own I am sorry. I had hoped Margery would have fancied you, seeing as it would have suited our dealings together. But if she won't, I tell you plain, it ain't Steve Kern's way to force a maid. And, after all, Dick is a very proper lad."

A moment later Dick Langston returned from his unbecoming task, the rope ladder was drawn up for the night and Steve Kern's household sat down to a bountiful supper, secure against all assault.

That night when Pierre Roublot retired to his rock-walked guest chamber it was not to sleep.

"I will have my revenge yet," he muttered, "and a revenge that shall strike all three. Strange, too, that the very moment when there arose the need of a weapon, Kern himself should have placed so good a one in my hand by slaying the preventive. With such ready forged, there cannot be long to wait for an opportunity."

Six months passed away, and Kern's lugger, the Petrel, which in the interval had had many successful trips, lay moored alongside the quay at Fecamp, waiting for her cargo of brandy and silks. Despite the fact that war was raging between France and England, Kern and his merry men were on the best of terms with the natives.

Since the night when he killed the preventive man at the foot of the ladder he had assumed a more than usual ferocious bearing, and the moment's weakness he had shown in the presence of Roublot was his last. He may have been suspected of having a hand in Sandy McIntyre's disappearance, but if so, in the absence of proof, no one dared to tax him with it.

secret mission. Know you of a man whom you could introduce to us?"

"Is it permitted to inquire what would be demanded of him?" asked Roublot, cautiously.

"But certainly, on this side of the channel, at least, there is no need for secrecy," replied the officer. "It is like this: Those accursed English have so blockaded our coasts that such of our cruisers as are not penned up in port are unable to venture in to renew their stores and ammunition. The Celestine frigate is in the channel short of powder. It is for the purpose of supplying her that we want an English smuggler, whom, as well as yourself, we shall treat with the utmost liberality."

"You forget, monsieur le capitaine, that, even in the breast of a smuggler, the fire of patriotism may burn," he said.

"Is that so? I had thought they were all rogues and vagabonds," replied the officer, looking crestfallen.

"Not to that extent—at any rate, none whom I know," said Roublot. "However," he went on, speaking eagerly, "let not that discourage you, monsieur. I will undertake to get your powder conveyed to the frigate if you will send it to my cellars. To be frank with you, I have a smuggler in port who is completely under my thumb. I can have him hanged in England for a crime there committed, and as good as witnessed by me. Where is the Celestine to be found?"

"Her captain sent word that he would run into the west bay of the Isle of Portland every dark night for a week," said the officer, in high glee at the success of his errand.

As soon as the officer departed to see about the delivery of the powder, Roublot threw himself back in his chair and laughed softly to himself.

"This is the chance I have been waiting for, for I have them both," he chuckled. "I will force Kern to take the powder to the frigate under threat of exposure for the murder, and then, in an anonymous letter, I will denounce him and Langston to the English Government for the treason—Kern himself also for the murder of the preventive."

So it was that when late that afternoon the heavy wagon bringing the Petrel's cargo lumbered on to the quay, Roublot accompanied it, and proposed that he should like to run over for a change of air and also to pay his respects to the so charming Mme. Langston.

Roublot made himself so especially sociable that by the time the party came on deck the cargo was all stowed, and Kern gave orders for immediate departure.

By sundown on the following day the huge mass of Portland loomed up on the horizon, and Kern began to congratulate himself on yet another successful run. The old smuggler stood at the tiller, his grim features relaxed into a placid content as his keen eyes failed to discover any sign of a revenue cutter, and he greeted Roublot, who had just come up from below, with a friendly nod.

"Cargo as good as landed," he said. "I shall keep her a point away to weather the Bill, and then run in to look for the signal. They always burn a red flare from the kitchen door if the coast's clear."

"I know, my friend; I have traveled with you before," replied the Frenchman, "but I should not trouble about the signal to-night. It is not to you perch among the rocks that the cargo's consigned this time."

"I don't take your meaning," "Well, I will do my best to enlighten you," replied Roublot. "I am before all things a patriot, my friend, and I have practiced upon you a trifling deception. Those kegs do not contain brandy, but gunpowder, which we are to convey to a French frigate now waiting in some need of it in the West Bay."

"When you round the Bill, instead of running in close under your interesting domicile, you will stand on until we meet the frigate."

"I've cheated the King—God bless him—for nigh onto fifty years, and made too good a living out of him to go and round on him like that. I'll see you somewhere before I do such a thing, you dirty French dog."

"Not so fast, friend Kern," said Roublot, with a sneer. "Unfortunately, you are not in a position to indulge in the freedom of choice. If you refuse to oblige me in this matter I shall denounce you for the murder of the preventive man, and the King whom you serve so faithfully will most assuredly hang you."

At that moment the lugger rounded the Bill, and high up in the cliff a red glow shone out. Kern knew that it was the signal from his own door bidding him welcome home in safety. His hand went to the knife, but he plucked it out and threw it into the sea.

"Cold-blooded murder I've no mind to, and that would be the only way out of it," he said with a sigh. "Very well, monsieur, I will do your bidding."

cliff a large anty loomed up a quarter of a mile away against the lingering glow in the western sky.

"That will be the frigate," said Kern, calmly. "Here, Dick, and you two others, come aft here a minute," he called. "Yonder is a French man-o'-war. M. Roublot and me are going to put some powder aboard her. I haven't got a choice in the matter, but that's no reason why you lads should turn traitor. Into the boat with you all, and pull for the ladder."

But as the three smugglers, sullen and half dazed, having obeyed their old chief mechanically, pushed off from the lugger, he called out in gentle tones: "My love to the missis, Dick, and to little Margery. I may be some time in France."

Guided by the red eye shining steadily above, the boat made for the base of the cliff, and as the men plied the oars they strained their eyes on the shadowy forms of the two vessels now rapidly approaching each other.

Dick saw the lugger run alongside the frigate. Perhaps ten seconds elapsed, and then a great sheet of fire leaped heavenward, a deafening roar followed and a blot of mist—the mist of drifting smoke—covered the scene.

When the last wreath had rolled away the pink flush on the skyline was perfectly clear; the frigate and the lugger were so many fragments of wood. Smuggler Kern had been one too many for his enemy—and those of his country—after all.—Answers.

"Dolly" Madison.
Mr. James G. Blaine, that keen observer of men and things, familiar with all the traditions of Washington, comparing the influence of the different ladies of the White House, unhesitatingly awards the palm to Mrs. Madison. Yet she never mingled in political affairs. It was solely by the influence of a gentle, womanly nature that it was said of her, "Mrs. Madison saved the administration of her husband." The following episodes, trifling though they seem, are significant. We quote from Mrs. Maud Wilder Goodwin's pleasant "Life of Dolly Madison."

William C. Preston, in his unpublished journal, describes his going, as a youth, to the White House, to pay his respects to the President and Mrs. Madison.

She advanced straight toward me, and extending her left hand, said, "Are you William Campbell Preston, the son of my old friend and most beloved kinswoman, Sally Campbell? Sit down, my son, for you are my son, and I am the first person who ever saw you in this world."

Turning then with a graciousness that charmed the young man, she introduced him to the circle of young girls about her, giving some special clue to each, and ending with, "Your kinswoman, Sally Coles."

At another of her levees, her attention was drawn to a rustic visitor, a youth who was evidently suffering all the torments of embarrassment. He had at last ventured to help himself to a cup of coffee, when Mrs. Madison walked up and addressed him. In the surprise of the moment, the lad dropped the saucer, and strove to crowd the cup into his pocket.

His tactful hostess took no notice of the accident, except to observe that in such a crowd no one could avoid being jostled, and straightway turned the conversation to the boy's family, and ended by sending her regards to his excellent mother, and bidding the servant bring another cup of coffee.

Two old ladies from the country once arrived at the White House while the family were still at breakfast. To the surprise of the rural visitors, the woman they had come to see appeared in a stuff dress of dark gray, protected by a large housewifely white apron, and with a linen kerchief pinned about her neck. Her simplicity of manner and attire completely swept away their awe, and before departing one of them found courage to ask:

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind if I kissed you—just to tell the folks about."

Unlucky Proverb.
Temple, the body-coachman of Ernest, King of Hanover, is the hero of a number of anecdotes which are told by his Majesty's chaplain in a volume of "Reminiscences." One of the most amusing relates to a transaction between Temple and the chaplain.

Temple lost his wife. Of course I, as chaplain, had to perform the funeral ceremony. A few days afterward old Temple, in deep mourning, called upon me. He was very much upset, and evidently had something on his mind which he found difficulty in expressing, for he stood a few moments in silence, and then turned his hat round and round, looked mournfully into it, brushed it with his hand, and at last got out, through stammering:

"I've called, sir—I've called, sir—as I wish to ask—and don't like to put it off—what I've got to pay you for that 'ere job?"

"Oh," I said, "nothing, of course. I have no fees, Temple; but I remember now I am in your debt, and I must ask you what I am to pay for the two pots of ointment you made for my horse's cracked feet?"

"Bless you, sir, don't mention it!" said Temple. "Nothing, sir, nothing; 'ere good turn deserves another' all the world over."