

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

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

It is quite plain that all Cubans look alight Major General Shafter, U. S. A.

The manufacture of steel is in a fair way to become an exclusive American monopoly.

Thanks to the firm grip of the estimated Toronto World, Canada has not slid an inch southward.

The year 1 of a new era has begun for Cuba. And the Cubans can be counted on to look out for No. 1.

While Spain only left Cuba after a four-hundred-year occupation, it meant a new departure for the island all the same.

You can't always judge a doctor by his patients or a lawyer by his clients. The grave and the State prison do not give testimony.

A German admiral thinks the late war taught no lessons of value on the sea. It certainly did to Spain, for all it graduated at the bottom.

The main difficulty with the Philippines is that they insist on neglecting the possibilities of a coconut crop in order to attend to cabinet crises.

One reason, doubtless, why fate permitted a preponderance of boys in the births of 1888 was so that more of them might be named George Dewey.

Spain now tells the world that she has lost all save honor. But as a matter of fact it was the loss of Spanish honor that brought on the war.

Don Carlos is willing to get his followers into trouble, but he keeps out of harm's way himself. As a pretender he should be hauled up for false pretenses.

Supposing it's so that the Czar Nicholas has papered a room with cartoon caricatures of himself, it may be on the principle of trying to see himself as others see him.

A physician says that the Chinese emperor suffers from abnormal melancholy. It is difficult to understand how any degree of melancholy could be abnormal in his case.

Somehow the same people who are willing to believe that the ninety-ninth year of a century completes the century would never consent to receive \$99 in full payment of a \$100 debt.

The manager who asks heroes to lecture for the almighty dollar ought to be hanged. He is the fellow who has been spoiling our heroes. He is the devil that tempts them with dollars.

Paris was conspicuously remiss in hospitality toward the American peace commissioners, but the hotels will continue to accept money from United States guests with their usual magnanimous affability.

A new tariff went into effect in Cuba on the 1st of January, by an executive order signed by President McKinley. There are large reductions in the rates imposed by the Spanish tariff, agricultural implements are admitted free, and cattle at a low rate, and the rates on food products are reduced to an average of 25 per cent. of their value. The tariff is specially framed to encourage local industry and to promote the recovery of agriculture.

Queen Victoria is reported to have said to ex-Empress Eugenie: "If war should break out between France and England I will ask God to allow me to die before it occurs." A lovely, womanly sentiment, but if the governing forces of France and England find a real cause for war what is anybody going to do about it? In such an event the gracious Queen of England will find that she has about as little to do with affairs as the throneless Eugenie.

The president of the London Institute of Civil Engineers reaches the conclusion, in a recent address, that a good seat in a first-class train is about the safest place in the world. In the same period, he says, in which twenty-four persons were killed on the railroad by accidents for which they were not responsible, eighteen hundred people were suffocated in bed, one hundred and forty-eight were choked by food in dining-rooms, and nine hundred and twenty-five fatalities resulted from falling downstairs.

A bibulously inclined citizen of New York drank three bottles of whisky in three hours, and died, of course. He said before his death that he had spent \$40,000 within a year or so for whisky for himself and friends, all of which one doubts, unless his friends were numbered in the thousands and tens of thousands. A hundred dollars a day for whisky is a good bit of money. It buys 600 or 700 drinks, depending upon the locality. But that is a detail. The puzzle is that in all this throng of parasites, or on its outskirts, the man had no near friends to apply for a guardian. Men who thus waste money are fit subjects for asylums only. If this man escaped it must have been because his legion of friends were all enemies.

A young woman, at least we guess she is young, wants to know if the year 1900 will be a leap year. It will not. If the first two figures were divisible by four without a remainder it would be a centennial leap year. The

Year 2000 will be a leap year and so will 1904. It is quite a while to wait for an opportunity to make a proposal, but it is the only way out of the predicament. And, by the way, as a matter of instruction it is worth noting that 1900 is not the first year of the next century. It is the closing year of the present century, just as 100 was the last of the first century. This has been the subject of dispute time and time again, and it should be clear to all, though it is not.

Sir Robert Ball says the world will come to an end when the waters of the sea break through a thin spot, which must exist somewhere, and come in contact with the raging fires within the globe. This seems rational enough, when one recalls the explosion they had over in the Indian Ocean some years ago, which sent a tidal wave around the globe and absolutely engulfed an island or two. Fire and water will not coalesce, and when a body of water as huge as the ocean runs against a fire like the one within the globe there is bound to be trouble. But go on with your business affairs and pay your bills as usual. The time may be far distant when the water will find the crack leading to the fire.

It is practicable and not necessarily largely expensive to plant trees by the roadside and protect them until they are out of danger. If it were possible to arouse public attention to the value of roadmaking, so that good roads should be the rule and inferior roads the exception, if the entire rural population could be made to grasp the economic value of good roads, it might be possible to still further anticipate the time when all of our highways would be adorned with shade trees, such as the Linden, elm, oak, maple, black walnut and other desirable varieties, including apple, cherry and pear trees, at reasonable distances apart. Could such a new departure be inaugurated and become national, in a hundred years or less the United States would earn a renown such as has fallen to the lot of no other nation under the sun. State and national legislation, by small appropriation, might help on the good work, and the expenditure, whatever it might be, would pay immense dividends in health, beauty and enjoyment, and demonstrate that man is a co-worker with the Creator in beautifying his "foot-stool." If the man who makes two blades of grass where but one had grown is a benefactor of his race, the man who plants a tree by the roadside is his kinsman.

Aside from the stimulus which comes from the interchange of ideas, there is one obviously good practical result to be expected from the teachers' conventions which are held simultaneously in various States of the Union. It has always been understood that the public school system throughout the Union should be as homogeneous as it could be made, with due allowance for disparity of local conditions. As time goes on, however, the differences in local conditions are disappearing more and more rapidly. Excepting in some unprogressive rural districts in the far East and South, the old-fashioned, isolated district school, with its queer assortment of text books and its independent methods, is nearly a thing of the past. The tendency everywhere is toward conformity to the graded school, and the graded school not of the rural but of the metropolitan type. It is one of the unheeded curiosities of this country that a student of the school systems of cities ranging in size from Pittsburgh or Buffalo to Philadelphia and Chicago can go into the towns of 5,000 or less and find schools in many respects very similar to those of the big cities. It is one of the things in which Americans have a right to feel pride that in all cases the desire and the tendency are to secure the best modern appliances of education and the most advanced methods. The influence of these conventions is not only to advertise improvements wherever they are adopted, but to establish a certain uniformity of standards. The public school teachers are very much in earnest in their commendable ambition to allow no progressive movement to be undertaken without having a part in it. At the State conventions they find the information that they desire and become acquainted with the standards which are in use throughout the country. This work, if carried on persistently, means that sooner or later the school system ought to be very nearly of even merit and efficiency in all States. The ideal of a good school is one which makes good citizenship, and good citizenship is fundamentally the same everywhere.

Crime in Bad-Roads District.
The extent and number of bloody feuds in the mountainous districts of some States is attributed to the inaccessibility of the people, their ignorance, enforced idleness and consequent crime. In many districts the roads are so bad that a four-horse team can pull but a ton during the summer and fall, while at other seasons what little transportation there is takes place by pack mules. Schools could not be attended if they existed, the people are out of touch with their kind, and have nothing better to do than to make and drink "moonshine" whisky and nurse their feuds. Permanent roads would revolutionize these communities, make industry possible and profitable, cause the establishment of schools and repress criminal tendencies.

CASH VALUE OF IMMIGRANTS.

Germans Bring the Most Money Into the Country and Italians Least
If one were to gauge the worth of newly arrived immigrants by the amount of money they bring with them, those who come from Germany would take first rank. England would hold second place and Italy the last.

The average German who comes to this country brings \$52.96 with him. When the average Englishman comes he brings \$1.40 less, or \$51.56. The next wealthiest average immigrant is the Frenchman, who comes with \$47.23 in his pocket. The Belgian is fourth in the list with \$45.00.

The Italian, who is the poorest of all, brings \$9.98, but it is safe to say that he returns to his native land the wealthiest of all who go back if his propensity for saving is a thing to judge by.

The Turk who comes to America brings \$35.56 with him, and stands well toward the top of the list. The average Irishman comes over, to stay, with a capital of \$15.26, while the Russian, according to the annual report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, brings \$12.10.

The Solar Day.

Nine persons out of ten, yes, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand—if asked how long it takes the earth to turn once on its axis would answer twenty-four; and to the question, How many times does it turn on its axis in the course of the year, the answer would be three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter times.

Both answers are wrong. It requires but twenty-three hours and fifty-six minutes for the earth to make one complete turn, and it makes three hundred and sixty-six and a quarter turns during the year.

The error springs from a wrong idea of what is meant by a day. The day is not, as is commonly supposed, the time required by the earth to make one turn on its axis, but the interval between two successive passages of the sun across the meridian; that is to say, the time which elapses after the sun is seen exactly south, in its diurnal course through the heavens before it is again seen in that position.

Now, in consequence of the earth's revolution in its orbit, or path round the sun, the sun has the appearance of moving very slowly in the heavens

A woman cannot be said to be cynical until she quits raving over doctors and ministers.

It may have been indigestion that made the whale give Jonah up.



Repairing Dirt Roads.

For a long time to come dirt roads will predominate throughout the country, no matter how rapidly the movement progresses in favor of hard, permanent highways. It is of the first importance that they should be correctly made and properly cared for, in order to get good results from them. In discussing their construction and maintenance, E. G. Harrison, government road expert, says:

"Except when the frost is coming out of the ground in the spring, it will be quite possible to build ordinary dirt roads so that they will be very satisfactory and so that they can be kept in good condition throughout the year except during a few weeks of spring thaw. The best way, after the road is properly built, is to hire somebody in the vicinity, some laboring man, for instance, to keep in repair permanently a particular stretch of road. He can start out then just after every rain when he wouldn't be working in his fields, and with a single shovel he can make all necessary repairs to the road.

"If water is collecting in any spot, he can open up a little ditch and let the water drain off properly, although if the road was properly built, this would rarely occur. He can toss stones to one side that the rain has washed down. And, especially, he can look to see that no holes are forming. A little hollow starts in a road. The next wagon scoops into a trifle more dirt, another wagon another trifle. Soon there's a big hole. It rains. Water collects in the hole and forms mud, and then the mud clings to the wagon wheels and the hole grows faster than ever. But if, in the very beginning, the road repairer had filled in the small hollow with his shovel and some dirt, and stamped the earth down a bit, then the wagons would have packed the dirt like a roller and the hole would never have got a chance to grow.

It's best to have roads kept in repair by contract, for then it's to the interest of the contractor that no important repairs should ever become necessary. He will exercise constant care, and with a very little labor every week he'll have no difficulty in keeping the roads in perfect condition."

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In a direction from east to west. All noon to-morrow the sun will be a short distance to the east of the point in the heavens at which it is seen at noon to-day, so that when the earth has made one complete turn it will still have to turn four minutes longer before the sun can again be seen exactly south.

LANDSEER A JUVENILE GENIUS.

As perhaps most American boys know, Landseer, the English artist, painted deer and dogs as no one had ever done before, and as, perhaps, no one has done since. He was said to have humanized their expression. His genius developed very early, so that, when only 14 years of age, his picture of a magnificent dog, chained to its kennel, and carried away by a flood, attracted considerable notice at an exhibition of the Royal Academy. A gentleman who was very much struck with its merit hurried off to the painter to make an offer for it; he rang at the door of a small garden. When the gate opened he saw a boy playing with a hoop with some other little fellows. He inquired of the children: "Does Mr. Landseer live here?"

"Yes," replied one of the boys. "When may I speak to him?" "Now, if you like; I am Mr. Landseer."

"But," explained the visitor, "it is your father I want to see. I have called about a picture of his at the academy." "Well," said the child, "it is I who am exhibiting the picture," and he proceeded to make the sale.

His technical powers were extraordinary. He was once present at a party, when the conversation turned upon feats of manual dexterity, and a lady exclaimed: "Well, there is one thing nobody has ever done yet, and that is to draw two things at once!" "Oh, yes; I think I could do that," returned Landseer. And with a pencil in each hand he drew a profile of a stag's head with all its antlers complete, and the perfect profile of a horse's head. Both drawings were full of energy and spirit.

The Timid Led by the Blind.

"I saw a most remarkable occurrence on the street the other day," said a professional man, "and it made a deep impression on me. A lady came down Enclid avenue and stopped at the corner of Bond street. She evidently wanted to cross to the other side of the avenue. She was not a young woman and she did not look strong. There was quite a jam of vehicles in the street, motor cars, wagons and bicycles, and she seemed a little timid about risking the passage. As she hesitated a man came up Bond street and paused beside her. He was a well-dressed man and carried a heavy cane, which I noticed he used constantly as if he might be a little lame.

"Sir," said the lady to him, "can I ask you to offer me the protection of your arm in crossing the street?" "She said this in a very sweet and ladylike way and the man with the cane touched his hat.

"Certainly, madam," he replied, and offered his arm. As they crossed the street I followed close behind them. The man with the cane was very careful. He halted several times, but they reached the other side without mishap. As the lady let go of his arm she said: "Thank you, sir, for your courtesy and protection."

"You are quite welcome, madam," he replied. "But I fear you overvalue my protection—because I am blind!"

"And touching his hat again he turned and picked his way up the crowded sidewalk."

When Love Means Vanity.

The women of French-Canadian households throw themselves out sooner than the men, who, as a rule, marry again very quickly.

A girl, too, considers it a disgrace if she hasn't a beau to see her home from church. A little habitation servant of fifteen was found in tears by her mistress one Sunday morning. "What is the matter with you, Celestine?" asked her mistress. "It's the first Sunday since I was twelve I haven't had a young man to walk with," sobbed Celestine. "Think, madam, of the disgrace!"

"But how about Jean Seguin?" "Oh, last night Jean came in to say he had met a girl with a cow and a feather bed, and he liked her better than me, and wanted his presents back. Don't be sorry for me, madam, I'll try to get another beau before this afternoon, and be married first just to spite him." Five minutes later she sailed forth in cherry-colored ribbons in search of a fresh beau, and brought him back in triumph to dinner.—Buffalo Commercial.

Cesar on the Rhine.

The new and grand bridge across the Rhine, which the city of Bonn has just completed, is embellished by a most imposing entrance tower. Upon this art-loving university town has erected a statue of Julius Caesar in honor of his having been the alleged first builder of a Rhine bridge near Bonn, although historical research has plainly proved that the great Roman general crossed the river further up, near Neuwied. The attention of the good people of Bonn was again called to this fact a week or two ago by a professor of its university, but they are determined to keep their false hero guarding the entrance to their magnificent Rheinturme.—London Times.

One idea of a chump is a man who asks another man where he bought his umbrella.

A bad player and a bad piano make a bad combination.

The jokes of the writer who does his level best often fall flat.

SOLDIERS' STORIES.

ENTERTAINING REMINISCENCES OF THE WAR.

Graphic Account of Stirring Scenes Witnessed on the Battlefield and in Camp—Veterans of the Rebellion Relate Experiences of Thrilling Nature.

George Benjamin, a crippled and wounded miner, claims to have been with Custer at the massacre at the Little Big Horn. Although it was supposed that there was no survivor of the massacre, Benjamin's story bears marks of truthfulness, and the fact that he was held as a prisoner by the Indians and driven crazy by their tortures long prevented his experience from being made known.

"In the spring of 1876," says Benjamin, "I was prospecting in the Black Hills for gold with two other miners named Stone and Kelly. In June we were camped on Clark's Creek, and as we were getting short of supplies Kelly and I went out to shoot game for supper, leaving Stone in camp. When we returned we found him dead and horribly mutilated. We knew at once that the Indians were on the warpath, and that we'd better get out. So we started at once for Foster's ranch, but when we reached there we found that the Indians had been ahead of us. Every man, woman and child on the ranch had been murdered, and all the bodies had been mutilated. The house had been burned and all the horses and cattle driven off. We started for Cheyenne to give warning of the uprising, and on the way we met a body of Custer's men. They asked us to join in the pursuit and I consented gladly, but my partner, Kelly, decided to go on to Cheyenne. Not long afterward we found his body, scalped and cut to pieces, only a few miles from where we parted.

"We broke camp on June 16, and Major Reno scouted the trail to the Rosebud and struck a fresh trail where the Indians had crossed. Gibbons was ordered to cross the Yellowstone near the mouth of the Big Horn and meet Gen. Custer at the mouth of the Big Horn on June 26. On June 24 the trail of the Indians was scouted twenty-eight miles up the Rosebud. That night a council was held, and the troops left the Rosebud and marched up Dirty Woman's Creek toward the Big Horn ten miles, and went into camp, as it was too dark to venture over the divide. The next morning the troops were in saddle soon after daybreak, and about 8 o'clock the first Indians were seen by the scouts from the top of the divide. The men were in great spirits because they had come upon the Indians at last, although the evident indications were that we were outnumbered ten to one. Captain Benteen was sent toward some hills on the right to scout the Indians and obtain a view of the country. With him he took three companies of the Seventh Cavalry. Our command then moved on one mile further, and Major Reno was sent to the left, with orders to skirmish and drive the enemy if found. The main body was to protect or re-engage him, as required. Captain McDougal was in charge of the pack train, and was left with one company one mile from where Reno left us. On ahead of us were great clouds of dust, which seemed to indicate that the main body of Indians was on the run, either driving away the horses and cattle or getting the squaws and children out of the way for the threatened battle. Gen. Custer, with the other four companies, started for this commotion and swung his line toward the river, hoping to cross, but found no good crossing.

"We then fell back to the second bottom, where we were dismounted to examine our firearms and prepare for the battle. The signal to mount was given, and Gen. Custer at the head, with his hat in one hand, pointed to the Indians with the other, and cried out: 'There they are, boys. God bless you all, and follow me!' We charged on a dead run, but when we reached the river we dismounted, and every fourth man held the horses of the other three. Gen. Custer led the advance with his aids, Boston Custer, his younger brother, and Artie Reed, his nephew, by his side. Lieut. Tom Custer, his other brother, and Capt. Calhoun, his brother-in-law, were at the front with their commands.

"At first we met but few Indians, and they quickly gave way before us. But soon they swarmed upon us from every direction. They came upon us from front and rear and flank, and every ravine and every bush and tree seemed alive with them. We soon knew that we were doomed, and we fought as men fight only under such circumstances. A perfect storm of arrows and bullets was pouring upon us from every side, but we fought our way back to our horses, mounted, and in our struggle to reach the bluffs we left the greater portion of our men dead or wounded on the field. But ten Indians went down for every white man who fell. The companies of Capt. Calhoun and Lieut. Crittenden were thrown across our flank to protect our retreat.

"Gen. Custer was everywhere, and for a time seemed bullet and arrow proof. Capt. Keogh's company was exposed to the fiercest fire and his men were soon swept off. It seemed as if we were hours making that retreat of a quarter of a mile. We made our last stand on a little knoll, which we reached with only seven men out of our entire command.

"There the first thing we did was to shoot our horses, so as to make a breastwork behind which we could fight. Gen. Custer and his brother Tom and Lieut. Cook were among the last to fall. Custer died with his revolver in his left and his saber in his right hand, with a dozen dead Indians piled around him. And, indeed, almost every

man on that little knoll went down with just such a heap of red bodies around him. Charley Reynolds, a scout, and as brave a man as ever lived, brought down an Indian at every shot, and as he fell he emptied his revolver still with a steady hand. The Indians were armed, in addition to their bows and arrows, with the best guns to be had.

"Before we went into battle Trumpeter Martin was sent back with orders to Capt. McDougal and Capt. Benteen to hurry forward with their companies. Had they done so and had Reno's men come up to re-enforce us, the result might have been very different.

"When I shot my horse a bullet struck me in the head and I fell. In its death struggles the horse rolled over on me and protected me during the rest of the fight. When it was all over and the Indians swarmed over the knoll they chanced to see that I was still alive. They then bound me hand and foot and took me to their camp.

"There they already had two other white men, prospectors, and a young white woman. They put these three through tortures, which I was compelled to witness. But I was reserved for the last, because the execution I had done in the fight had been noticed, and they wanted to have revenge for it. In fact, they named me 'Little Thunderer,' and called me by that name all the time I was among them. The two prospectors were made to run the gauntlet again and again. Each time the arrows were pulled out by force and fresh ones shot into them. One of the men finally rested and was brained with a tomahawk. When the other became too weak to afford any more sport of that sort he was bound to a stake, a slow fire was built on his abdomen, and the bucks and squaws danced around him laughing over his death agonies. Then the woman was tortured to death.

"Finally they began upon me. They tied coils of fire upon my head and left them there until I fainted. When I came to they put on fresh ones. When I refused to open my mouth they smashed my upper jaw and knocked out my teeth with a hatchet. Then a squaw grasped my tongue with a rough pair of wooden pliers and dragged me over the ground in that way, to the great mortification of those who were looking on. They tied my hands to a stake, and then, stretching my body with all their strength, tied my foot to another. Then the squaws beat the soles of my feet until every bone was broken and the flesh was a jelly.

"A big buck thrust a dull lance through my thigh, plunging me to the earth. But these are only a small portion of the tortures they inflicted upon me while I lay stretched out there helpless. The bucks, squaws and boys all joined in shooting arrows into me, and at last, when they must have thought I could not endure much more, they tied me on an ant mound to be eaten by the large red ants. Horrible as the other tortures had been, this was the worst of them all. My breast is still one big running sore where the ants gnawed my flesh. It has never healed.

"My torture lasted three days, and every hour of that time seemed an eternity. If I had not been an unusually strong and healthy young man, I could not have lived through it. Before that time I scarcely knew what sickness was, but ever since I have suffered from their work. I still carry in my head the bullet I received in the battle. Buffalo Bill and his cowboys rescued me from the Indians at the end of three days, and took me where my wounds could be dressed."—Los Angeles correspondence of the New York Sun.

A Reputation by Mistake.
Our regiment in the old Union army made its reputation for coolness through a slip of the tongue. Our colonel was much given to the order "parade rest." On dress parade his regular order was "At-ten-shun! Show-her-harrus! Order harrus! Parade rest!"

"This would be repeated again and again in a rich, resounding tone, the colonel dwelling on the words parade rest with enjoyable emphasis and a peculiarly smooth or oily inflection. On one occasion the regiment was formed as a part of a long line of battle. The men were all nerves and excitement, and as the word was passed along the line that the enemy were coming there was that preliminary rattle of guns incident to hurried examination. In the midst of this preparation the men were startled by the colonel's sonorous "At-ten-shun! Show-her-harrus! Order harrus! Parade rest!" The boys were thunderstruck, but they obeyed like clock work. The other regiments looked on in wonder at our regiment facing an advancing enemy at a parade rest.

The colonel was as much astounded as any one. He had repeated mechanically the words of his favorite order, when he had meant to say something else. But he was equal to the occasion. Glancing from the nervous agitation of the men in the regiments to the left and right and then at the superb restraint and quiet of his own line, he said, with a choke in his voice: "I am proud of you, men. Now get ready to receive those fellows who are shooting at you. Rest at will; that is, damn it, down!" So it happened that the men chuckled as they began to return the enemy's fire, and in the very fierceness of the battle baptized their colonel as "Old Parade Rest," a name that clung to him as long as he lived, and one of which he never was ashamed.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Helix Worn by Girls.
In the eighteenth century Polish ladies obliged their daughters to wear little bells in order to proclaim where they were all the time.

Be calm in arguing, for fierceness makes error a fault, and truth discountenanced.—Herbert.