

Current Topics

RECENTLY A SERIES OF QUESTIONS propounded by Herbert Spencer was submitted to young people through the New York World. These questions designed to encourage investigation on the part of the young were as follows: 1. How happens it that sheep, rabbits and hares have eyes on the sides of their heads, while cats and dogs have their eyes nearly in front? 2. How is it possible for a lark, while soaring, to sing for several minutes without cessation? 3. Cows and horses drink in the same way that we do, whereas dogs and cats drink by lapping. Whence arises this difference of habit? 4. Why does a duck waddle in walking? And what is the need for that trait of structure which causes the waddle? 5. How is it that a bulldog is able to retain his hold for a longer period than other dogs? 6. Throughout the country the roads have strips of greensward several yards wide on either side of the part used for traffic. In what manner did those strips originate?

THREE SCHOOL GIRLS LIVING AT LIBERTY, N. Y., were the first to respond to the Spencer questions. The explanations offered by these Liberty girls are as follows: 1. Animals that chase each other have their eyes in front; animals that fear being chased have eyes at the sides of the head so that they may see if any enemy is sneaking up. 2. It is no more trouble for a lark to soar than for a man to walk; soldiers march better when singing. Soaring is even easier than flying ordinarily; it's like sliding down hill or coasting on a bike. 3. Because they are built that way. 4. A duck waddles because her legs are set far apart and far back. They are far apart because that gives a broad base for floating on the water and far back so that the duck can "kick behind" in swimming like a frog. 5. This is an old one. The bulldog can hold on for hours because his nose is turned back, permitting him to breathe easily with his mouth full. 6. In England, where the roads are very old, the sward at the sides was necessary to feed animals that men traveled with from place to place. So came the custom that is now retained mainly for the looks. In New England, Bermuda and other places peopled by British colonists some roads are very narrow. Our country roads are made wide to give plenty of room to "work" them, but out west stock-raisers sometimes drive their herds long distances to the railroad, grazing them by the way, just as English drovers must have done in the old days.

DESCRIPTIONS OF ENGINEERING FEATS are always interesting and at this time when the United States government is about to undertake the construction of an isthmian canal, the details of enterprises of this character are particularly acceptable to the reading public. A writer in the New York World points out that never before have so many large engineering undertakings been in progress or in contemplation as at the present time. This writer directs attention to Africa where the completion of the great dam across the Nile at Assuan a few weeks ago marks the first step in restoring to Egypt the fertility which made it the granary of the world in the time of the Pharaohs. When supplemented by that at Assiout, at a total cost of \$25,000,000 for the two dams, Egypt will have a reservoir of a billion cubic yards of water every year, thus removing the annual fear of shortness of crops dependent upon the risings of the Nile.

THE CAPE TO CAIRO RAILROAD SCHEME suggested by Cecil Rhodes is another great enterprise which, according to this writer, has taken practical shape. The building by Russia of the trans-Siberian railway in Asia has marked an era in that continent's progress. In Europe the Simplon tunnel, begun in 1898, is more than half completed, and it will probably be finished in two years on schedule time. Referring to the work in America, this writer points out that the completion of the Chicago drainage channel at a cost of over \$30,000,000 and the subway now in progress in New York are engineering feats that in an earlier period would have been ranked among the "wonders of the world." The Canyon Diablo viaduct of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad and the Mount Tamalpais railway near San Francisco are further illustrations of railway engineering of the kind that conquered the Rigi and Pike's Peak, made the summit of Mount Vesuvius a railway

station and gave to travelers the picturesque views of the Mauch Chunk, Mount Lowe and Mount Washington railways. South America also has similar and perhaps even greater engineering feats in mountain railroad climbing.

AT SOUTH BINGHAMSHIRE, NEAR HIGH Wycomb, an interesting relic of the occupation of Britain by the Romans has been discovered. This relic is in the form of a coin belonging to the end of the second century of the Christian era. The London Chronicle, describing this coin, says: It is of silver, about the size of a shilling and beautifully stamped, the figures and the lettering being almost as sharp and well-defined as a modern coin fresh from the mint. On the obverse is a bust of an empress, with face to the right, and the superscription "Julia pia felix Aug." On the reverse is the inscription "Venus Genetrix," with an image of the goddess. The empress whom this coin commemorates was the second wife of the Roman general, Septimus Severus, who became emperor A. D. 193, and died at York A. D. 211. An earthwork near Princess Risborough, in the same locality, is considered to have been constructed by him, and coins with his image and superscription have been found near the spot.

IT IS A FAMILIAR SAYING THAT ONE-HALF of the world does not know how the other half lives; and it is likewise true that even among civilized people marked ignorance exists concerning other sections of the world in which they are immediately interested. The world has, for instance, heard much of Siberia, and yet we know of it largely as a colony where convicts do most abound. A writer who has recently traveled through Siberia says that that "colony" comprises one-ninth of the land surface of the world. According to this writer, Siberia is larger than the United States and all their dependencies together with all of Europe outside of Russia, and after this comparison there would yet be sufficient territory out of which to build thirty-five states the size of Connecticut. Siberia has a population of more than eight million people and of this number, so this writer declares, 97 per cent are either natives or voluntary emigrants. As an agricultural district, Siberia is unexcelled and the great mass of the people are enjoying marked prosperity.

STOCKHOLM, THE CAPITAL OF SWEDEN, has the advantage of other cities of the world in the matter of telephone facilities. The Stockholm correspondent of the London Mail writes to his paper that while New York city has 150 telephones to every 10,000 inhabitants, while Paris has 71, London 47, San Francisco 706, Stockholm has 980 telephones per 10,000 inhabitants. The Mail's correspondent says: In every bedroom in every hotel there is a telephone; every tradesman, warehouse, shop and private dwelling is connected. Even the ordinary washerwoman is on the exchange. In the streets at nearly every corner is a public kiosk, where on payment of a small coin one can speak not only to any local subscriber, but even to one in any other town throughout the length and breadth of Sweden.

AN OIL PAINTING OF GEORGE WASHINGTON made by Stuart and purchased early in the nineteenth century for the sum of \$100 has recently been bought by W. T. Walters of Baltimore for the sum of \$2,500. Stuart was a struggling painter who was a native of Rhode Island. It is said that he offered the painting purchased by Mr. Walters to the state of Massachusetts for the sum of \$1,000. The offer was rejected and the painting was sold at the paltry sum of \$100. Stuart died 74 years ago and 74 years after his death his work seems to have met with appreciation.

ONE OF THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE ANTI-tax league which was organized in Paris as a protest against the closing of the congregational schools is the seizure by the authorities of the wine cellar owned by the father of Anna Gould's husband, the Marquis of Castellane. The marquis has appealed to the courts to require the authorities to show why taxes should be paid to a government which no longer respects public liberty. He insists that the government has exceeded its authority when it has closed the congregational schools and that those who are patrons of those schools may in justice and in law refuse to contribute to the public exchequer.

THE APHORISMS OF WILLIAM DEVERY, better known as "Big Bill" Devery, former chief of police of New York city, are being retailed voluminously by the newspapers of the land. Devery has just won a lively contest for the leadership of a Tammany assembly district by unique methods—some say disreputable methods. Whatever Devery's record as a public official may be,

some of his aphorisms are worthy of being preserved. They are a mixture of the slang of the North River water front gathered from boyhood and the vernacular of the criminal classes with whom Devery came in contact while he was a member of New York's "finest." Here are some of his recent sayings: "A boy wasn't no good when I went to school unless he proved it." "I always believe a woman's good until I'm convinced she ain't." "I learned that if you wanted a thing done, do it yourself, and then you've got next to the right man." "I could have ended the Boer war in a week with the New York police force." "No flies get into a closed mouth. See?" "A man that's hungry can't eat books." "The way to keep a friend is first to treat him right, second to treat him right, and third to treat him right."

THE RECENT CENSUS OF LONDON SHOWS the population to be 6,581,372. Considerable anxiety is manifested because of the birth rate in London which is now 29.3 per thousand while in 1872 it was 35.4 per thousand. The death rate in London also shows an increase.

THE MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF Berlin, agitated by the discovery that there are 30,000 cats in the city, have adopted the plan of requiring a feline license similar to that required for the dog in the United States. According to this municipal law, all cats not wearing a tag are to be destroyed.

TREE PLANTING IS AN INDUSTRY THAT has been engaged in by the people of Orsa, Sweden, to their great advantage. It is reported that in a generation this town has disposed of \$5,750,000 worth of trees. Through a system of replanting the municipality has a similar income in this line every thirty years. As a result of this enterprise it is announced that there are no taxes in that town.

THE INABILITY OF SICK CHILDREN TO explain their symptoms to their doctors has prompted some practitioners to make a specialty of the treatment of children's diseases. It is somewhat strange that in the past little attention has been given by medical men to this feature, but recently Dr. Welch of New York has conducted an inquiry at the Children's Sanitarium located at Mt. Wilson, Maryland, which inquiry had for its purpose the location of the germ of the disease popularly known as summer complaint. Under Dr. Welch's supervision two students, Charles W. Duval of Annapolis and Victor H. Bassett of Aledo, Ill., prosecuted the inquiry. As a result it is announced that they have discovered the germ of this disease. The discovery has roused considerable interest in medical circles and it may not be doubted that the result of these investigations will be of material benefit in the treatment of children's diseases.

ONE OF THE MOST NOVEL SUITS IN COURT history is reported from Ellenville, N. Y. A clergyman of that city brought suit against one of his parishioners for the sum of \$5 as recompense for the delivery of a funeral sermon. The clergyman won the suit in the lower court and the defendant has appealed the case.

THE ADOPTION BY THE CUBAN CONGRESS of the proposition to borrow \$35,000,000 on Cuban bonds has prompted the representatives of Mr. Roosevelt's administration to seek to persuade President Palma to veto the plan. It is admitted that the situation is very grave because it is not denied that the new Cuban government is in need of funds. If the new government be not permitted to resort to a bond deal, Cuban statesmen are at a loss to know just what course to take. The impression in Cuba is that there is an organized scheme in the United States to force Cuban annexation. Unless in his veto President Palma provides some solution of the problem it is predicted that his interference will be resented and yet with the hold which the United States government yet has upon the new republic it is conceded that President Palma will have the best of the situation. At the same time it is admitted that a dilemma confronts President Palma and that whichever horn he takes annexation of Cuba, a scheme strongly urged by a powerful organization in this country, will be the ultimate result.

A READING, PA., WOMAN WHOSE AGE IS said to be seventy years and who left her husband after fifty years of wedded life, has rushed into print giving to young women the advice "Never get married." This woman declares that she has money and all the comforts that money could buy, but that she was not contented, and she adds: "Besides, money isn't the only thing conducive to happiness. Better stay single. Marriage is