

SMOKELESS POWDER FATAL.

Its Use in Guns Not Made for It Often Causes Accidents, Declares Navy Officer.

One of the navy officers who has made a special study of ordnance, ammunition, etc., according to the New York Tribune, speaking of the explosion of the eight inch guns on the battleship Iowa, said:

No ordnance sharp seems to know the real cause of accidents to so many of the guns on the navy ships, and much study has been given to the subject. In my opinion these accidents are largely due to the use of smokeless powder in guns not made specially for this kind of ammunition. Where a gun has been made with the idea of black powder only being used, if there is any tendency to weakness anywhere it will develop with the use of smokeless powder, which has the greater energy, and is more erratic. If you should put two guns of the same size side by side, assuming that both guns have equal strength, you could tell by a cursory glance at the chasing which one was using smokeless powder, and which the old style, for the greater effect would be in the former. We speak of the life of the guns likely having become exhausted, but it is yet an unsettled question as to what the life of a gun is. Theoretically a 13-inch gun should last about 70 firings, but in the Spanish war the question seems to have been practically settled that it would run as high as twice that number. For example, the explosion of the 13-inch gun of the Iowa a few months ago was on its 138th shot, so the fact remains that guns do explode most surprisingly and unexpectedly, and especially when smokeless powder is being used in guns built for the use of black powder.

Speaking of great guns, the question of positions in ships has become a controversial one. Are we, the American navy, mounting our guns too low? Other navies mount their guns on a higher plane than we do, on the theory that it gives larger possibilities for their use in a seaway. The disadvantages of low gun positions—and this is especially the case on the low freeboard idea of the monitor—have been pointed out by seagoing officers, but no especial consideration to the proposition of higher positions has been given, because of the efforts to keep down weights and the center of gravity.

There is much of uncertainty in the problem, but there would seem to be good argument against the low positions, since the modern view of naval authority is that battle fleets must keep to the high sea, and the theory that naval battles will be fought at considerable distances from the bases of either enemy. The last board on construction decided that the gun positions of the American ships were not too low, but there is a different view among many of the officers, who have had practical experience, and they assert that

as the stability in a seaway is decreased the lack of height tends to render guns useless in even a moderate sea.

French Alligator Farms.

Several French dealers have recently visited America to purchase stock for an alligator farm which they propose starting in the south of France. Alligator skin has become so highly prized throughout France that the animal dealers believe it will pay well to raise the alligators on this, the first farm of its kind in the world. Not long ago President Loubet received a present of a hunting suit of alligator skin. The skin is said to be growing scarcer each year, and there is always a great demand for it for boots, shoes, handbags, writing pads, portfolios, and toilet articles.—New York Times.

What Microbes Are.

Since Pasteur demonstrated the fact that many human diseases are due to minute living things which grow and multiply in our bodies, there has been a tendency to call all microscopic organisms, whether harmful or not, "germs" or "microbes" or "bacteria" indiscriminately. This confusion may be cleared by the statement that protozoa are the lowest known forms of animals and that bacteria are the lowest known forms of plants, while "germs" and "microbes" may apply to the disease-causing forms in either group.—Century.

EVILS OF EATING ALONE.

The Digestion of a Solitary Diner Is Always at a Disadvantage.

There are some few happily disposed individuals, says the London Lancet, who can dine alone, and not eat too fast, nor too much, nor too little. With the majority it is different.

The average man puts his novel or his paper before him and thinks that he will lengthen out the meal with due deliberation by reading a little with, and more between, the courses. He will just employ his mind enough to help, and too little to interfere with indigestion. In fact, he will provide that gentle mental accomplishment which with happier people conversation gives to a meal. This is your solitary's excellent idea. In reality he become engrossed in what he is reading till, suddenly, finding his food cold, he demolishes it in a few mouthfuls; or else he finds that he is hungry, and paying no attention to the book, which he flings aside, he rushes through his food as fast as possible, to plunge into his arm chair and literature afterward. In either case the lonely man must digest at a disadvantage. For due and easy nutrition, food should be slowly taken and the mind should not be intensely excited during the process.

Every one knows that violent bodily exercise is bad just after a meal, and mental exertion is equally so. Wise people do not even argue during or just after dinner, and observation of after-

dinner speakers neither endure themselves nor excite in their hearers any severe intellectual effort. In fact, the experience of countless generations, from the red Indian of the woods to the white-shirted diners of a modern party, has perpetuated the lesson that a man should not eat alone, nor think much at this time, but should talk and be talked to while he feeds. Most people do not think much when they talk, and talking is a natural accompaniment of eating and drinking. How does it fare with the many solitary women of to-day? No better we know than with the men, but differently. Alone or not, a man may generally be trusted at any time to take food enough.

Fruit-and-Nut Fiends.

There is just one little, tiny, infinitesimal error in the assumption that our primordial ancestors lived entirely upon uncooked fruits and nuts, a trifling miscalculation which vitiates the conclusion that what met our wants when we dangled head downward from a tree limb will meet our wants now that we have been turned t'other end up. The error is this: They didn't. No animal lives exclusively on vegetable or

animal food. What's a chicken, carnivorous or graminivorous? Gramivorous, of course. It lives upon corn and oats and wheat, the seeds of plants, grass blades, the lettuce that you expected to eat, and all such. Yes, well. You keep them on that diet and see how many eggs you get. And then you give them beef scraps with their grain and notice the difference.—Everybody's Magazine.

Endurance of the Yak.

Yaks, which are the beasts of burden in Thibet, are very sure-footed and a good one will carry a load of more than 200 pounds safely along the steepest hillside. They can exist on the scantiest grass, but gain food suits them for a few days only. Eight miles a day is good average work. A recent traveler tried leather boots for yaks, without success. Tame yaks are white, black, gray and brown, and all intermediate gradations of these colors. The wild yak is invariably black, and in early spring his winter coat almost sweeps the ground. At such seasons wild and tame are almost indistinguishable, and a story is told of a big game hunter in Thibet who shot his own baggage animals by mistake.—Knowledge.

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