

The Smoke Nuisance.

In all our large cities and towns, east and west, where manufacturing is conducted to any considerable extent the use of bituminous coal is increasing. The limitation of the output of anthracite has forced this in a measure, but in any case the cheaper coal would force its way. The dim hued atmosphere, the begrimed buildings, a certain indescribable sootiness of aspect, marks the physiognomy of cities where the main dependence is on soft coal. Even in New York, where one of the greatest charms of the ensemble has always been noted in a crystalline beauty of the air and sky, the smoke nuisance is casting its shadow. It may be said that the increasing application of electricity to motor purposes, whereby the economical and effective combustion of coal and utilization of its heat units can be accomplished on a large scale, will tend ultimately to lessen the smoke volume from factory chimneys. It is true also that in eastern cities where anthracite coal will always be used for domestic purposes smoke will not be so much in evidence as in western cities. But there is no need in any case that there should be nearly the same amount of annoyance from this cause as actually exists.

In London there has been a perceptible diminution of the effects of smoke, according to the testimony of those in a position to make a continuous comparison. An ordinance exists in that great city compelling all manufacturing concerns which use coal in large quantities to consume the gases of incomplete combustion—for that is the philosophy of smoke—by specially devised apparatus. It is approximately successful, but it can never, of course, fully satisfy the fullness of the ideal. A million or so of households burning soft coal will have their effect, whatever restriction may be placed on the workshops and factories. But something very perceptible has been accomplished, it is alleged. If all large users of soft coal in the United States were obliged by law to adopt the smoke consuming apparatus, it would be found an economy to the user and a blessing to the health and æsthetic taste of the public. The experiment is well worth the trial, specially in many of the big cities of the west, where the smoke nuisance transforms even clear sunshine into a kind of yellow pallor, which is at times almost ghastly to the unaccustomed eye.

The German bureaucrats have lately been stunned to learn officially, what every one in business circles has known for a long time, that American pork, against which there has been an official war, has had easy access to the German market all along. Prohibition went into effect in 1892 under the law providing that no form of American pork should be admissible unless an official inspector's certificate accompanied it vouching

that it had been examined under the microscope and found free from trichinae. Of course that for many reasons is for the most part impracticable. The working rule has been, however, that the prescribed articles have been continually smuggled through the custom houses and that English dealers buying the American hog meat have put it on the German market as English ham and bacon, which always command higher prices.

Nonsense, mere airy folly, is often more amusing than the brightest wit, and it takes a more gifted mind to blow the soap bubbles of clever nonsense than to strike off sparks of wit with the clash of flint and steel. Any social observer has constant occasion to observe the difference.

Human courage is a curious compound in most cases of vanity, shame and temperament, and were it not for its negative side, fear, its highest positive in deeds of heroism would not exist. To dare is to be very conscious of something to be dared.

The terrible annual destruction of forests by fire has lately been resumed in Wisconsin. In the five northern pine counties the devastation has been general. A furious cataclysm of flame has reduced 500,000,000 feet of standing pine to ashes, in addition to immense tracts of hardwood timber. These yearly inflictions appear for the most part to have been started by the carelessness of hunters. There is no means of providing against the almost certain contingency except by remodeling human nature. A magazine writer recently estimated that during the last score of years \$50,000,000 worth of lumber had been burned up by forest fires in the United States.

The most omnivorous readers are not always the most penetrating and luminous minds. The process of digestion and assimilation is often injured by the habit of gross feeding. This is well illustrated by the joke of the old Quaker lady at the expense of Macaulay, who was boasting of the number of books which engaged his attention every day. "Why, friend Thomas, when does thee get time to think?"

The American authorities in Manila, like those in Santiago and Porto Rico, have opened the schools on as liberal a basis as possible. Paper missiles are sometimes more effective in the long run than iron and lead.

An amusing item in The Straits Budget describes a masquerade ball given by a Chinese club in Malacca. It goes to prove that John Chinaman is not always such a fossil as he is supposed to be. This society item was as follows: "Li Chin Hi appeared as a courtier of Queen Elizabeth; Chi Kang

Cheng as Henry II, with a pigtail; Koh Tiong Siew as a barrister; Chan Koon Cheng wore a dress entirely covered with stamps, as a Liverpool indigo merchant; Pan Chay Yan wore the kilt of a highlander; Lee Chim Giang was a fourteenth century gentleman; Lee Ching Bong went as George III, and Oh Seng Giap as the queen's coachman. But the most pathetic figure in the list is Chee Wang Cheng, who was absent. He was to have appeared as Napoleon Bonaparte." One marvels how the revelers managed the sacred pigtail on such an occasion.

A strong movement in England is stirring the question of decimal coinage to replace the very complicated and difficult measure of sterling money. That has outworn its usefulness. Merchants are beginning to see in their antiquated coinage one reason why British foreign trade has stood still while that of the United States and Germany has made such tremendous strides. The absurdity of using the metric system of weights and measures in international trade while still clinging to the antiquated figuring in pounds, shillings and pence is evident at a glance.

An order has been issued by the Prussian home minister complaining of the leniency of the police and soldiery in dealing with the election mobs. They are to use the edge of the sword and ball cartridge hereafter. This is in notable contrast with the mildness of England and the United States in dealing with election disturbances.

It is man only that ever laughs, all the other animals living very seriously.

Devotees of science are never so amiable as when they are at table. Most of them are somewhat gastronomic in their tastes unless they have had digestions. Lyndall and Huxley were wont to smile with great gusto when the butler entered with the magic words, "Dinner is served."

A mob stoned a member of the British legation the other day in Peking. It has not been figured out yet just how many square miles of territory the apology will needs cover.

A Stone That Grows.

A West Gouldsboro (Me.) man tells a queer story about a stone that grows. It is an egg shaped, flinty looking rock, which he picked up in a cove near his home over 30 years ago. Then it weighed about 12 pounds and from its odd shape was kept in the house and on the doorstep as a curiosity. As the years passed the stone increased in size. Six years ago it weighed 40 pounds, and now it tips the scale at 65 pounds. The owner swears it is the same stone, and tells a likely story, with numerous witnesses to back him up.—Exchange.