

THE GREATEST SHIPS.

A LOT OF CURIOUS INFORMATION ABOUT VESSELS.

Quickest Time Across the Atlantic—Largest Vessels of All Kinds—Fastest Ships, Etc.

The first, fastest, finest, biggest ships in the world present a wonderful study. At no time has such general interest been directed to the subject of marine superlatives in this country as in the year 1891. The greatest ocean highway in existence is that across the Atlantic between Great Britain and the city of New York, and the records in which the world is most interested are made along that highway.

The fastest passage between New York and Queenstown, both eastward and westward, was made in the latter part of 1891 by the steamship Teutonic of the White Star line. The fastest passage from Queenstown to New York was made in August, being five days sixteen hours and thirty-one minutes. The fastest passage from New York to Queenstown was made in October, being five days twenty-one hours and three minutes.

The first steam vessel to cross the Atlantic ocean was the Savannah, which crossed from Savannah, Ga., to Liverpool in 1819. The first steam vessels to reach New York from Great Britain were the Sirius and the Great Western. The Sirius, a ship of 700 tons, sailed from Cork April 4, 1838, and the Great Western, 1,340 tons, left Bristol three days later. They arrived on April 23, the Sirius in the morning and the Great Western in the afternoon.

The greatest steam vessel ever built, in size, was the Great Eastern, which was 692 feet in length, and 83 feet in breadth. The Teutonic is 582 feet in length.

The largest turret ship in the world, perhaps the largest battle ship in existence, is the British battle ship Hood, which was launched at Chatham, on July 30, 1891. The Hood has a displacement of 14,150 tons. The largest American war ship is the harbor defence vessel Miantonomah. The finest war ship in the French navy is the Brennus, which was launched early in October, 1891. Her displacement is 11,000 tons.

The longest sailing craft afloat is the British ship Lancing. She is a four-masted iron ship of 2,600 tons and 356 feet in length. In 1890 the keel was laid in a shipyard on the Clyde of what was to be the largest sailing craft in the world. Her tonnage was to be 9,600, her length 350 feet, and she was to have five masts. The three biggest four-masted ships in the world are said to be the Palgrave, the Liverpool, and the Puritan. The Palgrave measures 3,081 tons, the Liverpool 3,330 tons.

The three biggest American sailing ships in existence last year were the Rappahannock, the Shenandoah, and the Susquehanna. The Rappahannock was burned on the South Pacific Nov. 11, 1891. The largest sailing vessel in the world, says the skipper of the Shenandoah, who rates his craft next to the five-masted French steel ship La France.

The biggest steam ferryboat in the world is the Cincinnati, built by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to ply between New York and Jersey City. The latest steam engine in the world is on the new Italian cruiser Sardegna. A force of 25,000 horse power is developed.

The fastest ship in the United States navy, it is supposed, is the Pacific coast which on her trial on the Pacific coast, maintained during a four hours' run a speed of 19.7 knots an hour. That was one-tenth of a knot in excess of the record of the Philadelphia. The maximum speed developed by the San Francisco was 20.06 knots an hour, which is equivalent to twenty-three land miles.

One of the fastest voyages from China to New York was made in the summer of 1890 by the steamship Glen Ogle of the Glen line of Glasgow, which arrived from Amoy in forty-eight days. The fastest time was by the Glenholm of the same line, forty-three days.

The fastest passenger steamboat plying in the waters of the United States is the Mary Powell, running from New York city to Albany. Nobody knows just how fast she could go if put to her mettle.

The greatest fleet of passenger vessels owned by one company is that of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. In the fleet are seventy-two steamships of 199,270 tons and 189,000 horse power. The P. and O. steamships steamed 2,500,000 miles in 1890 without an accident.

The biggest fore-and-aft schooner in the latest Government list is the Golden Age, 1,763 tons, built at Abbots Bridge, O., in 1883. The Governor Ames, built at Waldboro, Me., in 1889, registers 1,850 tons, and is the largest schooner in salt water.

The largest floating elevator in the world was launched on Jan. 14, 1892, in Brooklyn. Its tower rises 74 feet above its deck.

Norman L. Munro's steam launch Norwood, with her record of a mile in 2.12, made on Nov. 7, 1891, may be considered "the fastest boat afloat."

The first steamboat to plough the Pacific along the coast of North America was the Hudson Bay Company's steamboat Beaver, which is to be exhibited at Chicago.

The first screw propeller on the great lakes was the Vandalia. Her machinery was built in Auburn prison, New York.

The first steamship to make a direct trip from New York to Australia sailed in October, 1891. Her name was Karlsruhe.

The first whaleback steamship built was the Charles W. Wetmore, which made the voyage to Liverpool and back in the summer of 1891. The first whaleback of any importance was the yacht Livadia, designed by Admiral Popoff for the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia. She is 240 feet in length.

The biggest sugar fleet ever assembled at Delaware Breakwater consisted of twenty-five vessels, carrying 12,000 tons of sugar from the West Indies.—[New York Sun.]

THE PAMPAS.

LIFE IN SOUTH AMERICA'S GRASSY DESERT.

Snake-Hunting Armadillos and Wrestling Frogs—The Fierce Puma and Its Fear of Man.

One of the most interesting regions of the world is the grassy desert of the Argentine, known as the "pampas," which extends half way across South America from the Atlantic Ocean—a vast plain without trees, lakes or rivers, bearing a strange and wonderful fauna. Lacking these features of variety the region has no aspects of grandeur and the dead level affords no appearance of extended space. At sea, a person's eye being six feet above the surface of the water, his horizon is only two miles and four-fifths distant. On land, in a perfectly flat country, the limits of observation are equally contracted. People born and bred on the "pampas" when they first visit a mountainous district experience painful sensations from viewing the widely extended earth around them.

One of the most plentiful species of mammals is the strange armadillo, one of the most ancient of surviving creatures, which was contemporary with the gigantic glyptodont and colossal megalotherium. It figures conspicuously in the fables current among the natives, being represented as a creature fertile in expedients and duping other animals, especially the fox, just as "Br'er Rabbit" does. Snakes, venomous or otherwise, are its favorite prey, and it kills them by actually sawing them in two with the serrated edges of its sharp, bony shell. The bites of the serpent make no impression upon its enemy, probably proof against the venom, like the mongoose. Snakes of the pampas have many foes. Herons and storks swallow them whole. The sulphur "tyrant bird" picks up the young serpent by the tail and uses it like a ball against a branch or stone until its life is battered out. Another destroyer is the green lizard, which kills snakes by striking them with its powerful tail, itself rendered invulnerable by its coat of armor. The iguana has been known to assail with great ferocity a lasso trailed from a saddle along the ground, mistaking it for a giant opidion.

Frogs in other parts of the world are among the most inoffensive of animals depending upon their jumping powers for escaping, but there is a species found on the pampas which possesses an extraordinary means of defense. Dr. W. H. Hudson tells of an adventure he had while out snipe shooting one day, when, peering into the disused burrow of some rodent animal, he saw a burly looking frog sitting within it. "Though I watched me attentively," he says, "the frog remained perfectly motionless, and I greatly surprised me. Before I was sufficiently near to make a grab it sprang straight at my hand, and, catching two of my fingers round with its fore legs, administered a hugo sudden and violent as to cause an acute sensation of pain. Then immediately it released its hold and leaped away. I flew after it and barely managed to overtake it before it could gain the water. Grasping it behind the shoulders so that it could not attack me I noticed the enormous development of the muscles of the forelegs, usually small in frogs, bulging out in this individual like a second pair of thighs and giving it a strangely bold and formidable appearance. On holding my gun within its reach it grasped the barrel with each snout and bruised the skin of its breast and legs. That singular frog is able to seriously injure an opponent cannot be supposed, but its unexpected attack must be of great advantage. How great must be the astonishment it causes an adversary by its leap quick as lightning, and the violent hug it administers. I think that 'wrestling frog' would be an appropriate name for the species."

Great among the carnivores of the pampas are the jaguar and puma. There is also the "grass cat," not unlike the domesticated animal, but larger, more powerful, and frightfully savage. The puma, although the most blood-thirsty of flesh-eating creatures and extremely ferocious, has one very extraordinary characteristic—it will never attack man and cannot be induced even to defend itself against him. In places where it is the only large beast of prey, even a small child may go out in safety and sleep on the plain. Yet this same creature commonly attacks and kills the formidable jaguar, harassing the latter by moving about it with such rapidity as to confuse it, and when an opportunity occurs, springing upon its back and inflicting terrible wounds with teeth and claws. It kills cattle and horses in great numbers, breaking the neck of each animal attached with a single blow. Pumas have been occasionally kept as pets, never showing the slightest ill-temper. They are the most playful of animals, and are always delighted to gambol with a pool tied to a string.

One of the most interesting mammals of the region described is the "vizeacha," which is a rodent very common on the pampas. It is nearly two feet long, exclusive of the tail, when full grown and weighs about fourteen pounds. This species lives in a small community of twenty or thirty members, in a village of deep chambered burrows, all with their pit-like entrances closely grouped together. The animals make a smooth clearing all around their village on which a turf is formed, and here they feed and enjoy their amusements in comparative security. Any enemy that approaches is soon at the first note of alarm the whole company scuttles into the burrows. They fetch sticks and all sorts of refuse from every hand and pile it up about the village, forming in the course of years a mound thirty or forty feet in diameter, which protects the habitation from floods. Each burrow of the vizeacha ordinarily opens into a large circular chamber at from four to six feet from the entrance and from this chamber other chambers diverge in all directions. The new "vizeacheros" or village is invariably begun by a male which, after establishing himself as a solitary with a single burrow is subsequently joined by other individuals, and these are the parents of innumerable generations, for they establish no temporary lodging places, but their posterity continues in the quiet possession of the habitations bequeathed to it for centuries.

Another remarkable rodent of the pampas is the "coypu"—a rat in shape and as big as an otter. It is aquatic, and lives in holes in the ground. In the evening these animals are all out swimming and playing in the water, conversing together in strange tones, which sound like the moans and cries of wounded and suffering men. Among them the mother coypu is seen with her progeny, numbering eight or nine, with as many of them on her back as she can accommodate, while the others swim after her, crying for a ride. The coypu was much more abundant fifty years ago than now, and its skin, which has a fine fur, was exported to Europe. About that time the dictator Rosas, issued a decree which made the killing of a coypu a criminal offense. The result was that the creatures increased and multiplied exceedingly, and abandoning their aquatic habits, they became terrestrial and migratory, swarming everywhere in search of food. Suddenly a mysterious malady fell upon them, from which they perished in enormous numbers, becoming almost extinct.

Among the extraordinary phenomena observed on the pampas are storms of dragon flies. They come before the southwest wind, which blows from the interior. It is a cold wind, exceedingly violent, bursting on the plains very suddenly and lasting only a short time. Moving ahead of such a gale the dragon flies apparently in great numbers, and moving in clouds at the rate of seventy or eighty miles an hour, fairly darken the air with their swarms. They come without warning, the air to a height of ten or twelve feet above the ground being all at once seen to be full of them, rushing past with astonishing velocity in a northeasterly direction. Men and horses in their path are quickly covered with clinging masses of them. They are about twice the size of the dragon flies that are known elsewhere, being three or four inches in length.—[Washington Star.]

Interesting Items From Everywhere.

A gold brick recently shipped from Yuma, Arizona, to San Francisco is said to be worth \$90,000. A residence constructed of bricks like this would cost several dollars more than most people can afford to pay.

In a hail-storm in West Virginia recently the hailstones were like great chunks of ice, and smashed windows and made large holes in the tin roofs of houses that got in their way. If these storms would be more accommodating and come along in summertime the ice bills of the fathers of some of us would be very largely reduced.

Clocks are regarded as curiosities by the Hindus, and for this reason half a dozen or more timepieces are often found in the apartments of the wealthy Hindustanites. They are not used as timepieces, but simply for ornament, since the old-fashioned way of telling the hour of the day in India, by calculating the number of bamboo lengths the sun has traveled above the horizon, is entirely satisfactory to the natives. It is said that in the country police stations in India, where the European division of the hours is observed, time is measured by placing in a tub of water a copper pot in which a small hole has been bored. It is supposed that it will take one hour for the water to leak into the pot, so as to fill it and sink it. When the policeman sees that the pot has disappeared he strikes the hour on a bell-like gong. If he is smoking or dozing, the copper pot may have disappeared several minutes before he discovers the fact; but the hour is when he strikes the gong.—[Harper's Young People.]

Eating Calla Lilies.

A new vegetable is about to be introduced through the Department of Agriculture. It is the root of the calla lily, which resembles somewhat in appearance the ordinary Irish tuber, with the addition of a few whiskers, that have nothing to do with the quality of the article as an esculent.

It is more elongated, and when cut the interior is a trifle more viscid; but a section of it is so potato-like you would not be likely to distinguish any difference. In cooking it has first to be boiled to destroy certain acid properties, after which it may be fried, roasted, baked, or what not, according to taste. Farms in Florida have begun to raise these calla roots for market, says food.

The plants grow readily in swamps, and so thickly that the yield of a single flooded acre is enormous. They reproduce themselves by the multiplication of their bulbs underground, so that the grower has simply to dig up the offshoots and leave the parents to propagate anew.

For centuries the Egyptians have cultivated a similar crop during the seasons of the Nile overflow, and the present time the calla lily bulbs are a common vegetable in the Japanese markets. So prolific and palatable are they that their propagation in many parts of the United States, where conditions are favorable, may reasonably be looked forward to as an agricultural industry of the future.—[New York Journal.]

Origin of Wall Coverings.

Tapestry came originally from Byzantium, where its weaving was brought to a high state of perfection. Its expense, like that of all wall covering and stucco, was very great. Stamped leather, which, in a measure, superseded it, was also costly and possible only to the very wealthy. This stamped leather consisted of the skins of goats and calves cut into rectangular shapes and covered with silver-leaf, then varnished with a yellow lacquer, to give the appearance of gold. It was then stamped and painted in various colors. Wall paper had, in the meantime, been extensively practiced by the monks of Europe. From the seventh century it had been the custom to decorate the walls of churches and cathedrals with Biblical scenes and other designs.—[Carpet and Upholstery Trade.]

WAS IT SECOND SIGHT?

A Strange Reminiscence of the Custer Massacre.

Among the many curious instances of seeming second-sight may be placed the following incident of that saddest tragedy of modern days—the death of Custer and his gallant followers.

The love existing between Captain Blank and his blue-eyed boy, little "Buster," the pet and darling of the whole garrison, was something to be remembered. Whenever the tall soldierly figure of the young father was to be seen, unless on duty, that of the child was sure to be close beside, sometimes riding on his father's shoulder, sometimes clinging to his hand, always lifting to his eyes full of passionate love and content.

When the dreaded day came that was to separate those fearless men from the women and children who so loved them, Buster could hardly be torn from his father, and my husband told me that long after, the child's shriek of utter misery, unchildlike in its intensity, rang in his ears. For some days after the command had marched across the low purple hills, out of the reach of loving eyes, Buster drooped and pined; but he was a child, and the old childish gaiety came back to his eyes, and his laugh, which rang out as happily as ever, almost jarring upon his young mother's ear.

One warm June day at Fort Lincoln Mrs. Blank sat sewing in her tiny parlor, her baby creeping about the floor at her feet, while she chatted with two or three more lonely wives, perhaps of the beloved ones far off across the plains and their possible return. Suddenly Buster rushed in through the open door, eyes sparkling, hair flying.

"Mamma," he shouted, "my papa's 'ooting his 'olter! I heard him!"

"Did you, darling?" his young mother said, stooping to kiss the little flushed, eager face. "How very nice! I wish he could come home and 'oot it. Don't you?"

"He's 'ooting Injuns," the child went on, "and he'll 'oot 'em all, and zen he'll 'ome home."

"I'm sure I hope he will," sighed Mrs. Blank. "Run out and play, Buster, and don't go in the sun."

"How Buster does talk about his father!" some one remarked. "I often meet him running along with some one, and, child or man, soldier or officer, you can always catch the words 'my papa is 'ooten to him!'"

Then the talk wandered on, always in a minor key, for there had been quite an interval of time since the last letters and there was always unacknowledged anxiety, though all felt unbounded faith in the powers of the gallant Seventh.

Presently the sound of a child's bitter crying brought them all to their feet, and Buster ran into his mother's arms at the door, sobbing wildly.

"Mamma," he sobbed, "the Injuns has dot my papa. He's dot no more 'oots in his 'olter; he's 'ooted it all. Oh, I want my papa, and the bad Injuns has dot him!"

Mrs. Blank knelt down on the floor beside her boy, drawing him close to her heart. "Hush, Buster," she said, very gently, but firmly, "you must not be such a silly little boy; the Injuns can't get your papa. General Custer is there; he will take care of papa, and all the men. Do you think F. Troop would let the Injuns get papa? See, you are making us all feel very bad, and papa would say that you were not his brave little lad. Now stop crying and go and play; you could not hear papa's 'olter so far away."

"Yes," the child exclaimed, earnestly, "I 'an hear my papa's 'olter, and I know he's 'ooted it all!" But army discipline prevailed, and the boy choked back his sobs, nestling in his mother's arms and resting there, strangely quiet, for the rest of the long summer day.

That evening, when the children were both sleeping, and the daily bulletin to her absent husband had been written Mrs. Blank sat for some moments in silent thought, then drawing a sheet of paper to her, wrote down the date, June 26th, and poured out to her only brother the aching of her heart and the senseless anxiety caused by the child's foolish words, the memory of which still stirred him in his sleep, for he sobbed and tossed all night.

On the 6th of July, when the whole army writhed and cried out in agony at the news that had come to us, we, to whom Mr. B. had shown his sister's letter, knew that on the 26th of June Captain Blank had dearly sold his life, and had been found pierced with many wounds, his empty revolver clasped in his stiffened hand. And far away, in his quiet home, his baby boy had seemed to know it.—[Harper's Weekly.]

The Puma's Fear of Man.

Dr. Hudson speaks of a "gaucho" (South American cowboy) of his acquaintance who went one day to look for cattle. A puma made his appearance and refused to walk away, even when the herder threw the noose of his lasso over its neck. The gaucho then dismounted, and drawing his knife, advanced to kill it. Still the puma made no attempt to free itself from the lasso but it seemed to know what was coming, for it began to tremble, the tears ran from its eyes and it whined in the most pitiful manner. He killed it as it sat there, unresisting, but after accomplishing the deed, felt that he had committed a murder. It was the only thing he had ever done in his life, he said, which occasioned him remorse when he remembered it, although he had slain several men in duels fought with knives. All who have killed or witnessed the killing of a puma agree that it resigns itself, in this pathetic manner to death at the hands of man. When attacked by the latter its energy and daring at once forsake it, and it becomes a weak, inoffensive animal, which, trembling and uttering piteous moans, implores compassion from a generous enemy. But the enemy is not often generous.—[Washington Star.]

Heavy white silk belts for large silver buckles are new, especially designed for wash dresses. They are more chic than belts of the same which must needs be lined.

PENNSYLVANIA ITEMS.

EPITOME OF NEWS GLEANED FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE STATE.

"GENERAL SEIGLE" Miller, accused of the murder of old man Hochstetter, the moon-shiner, testified in his own behalf at Somerset. He claimed that the killing was done in self-defense. Numerous witnesses declared that Hochstetter had frequently threatened Miller's life.

A MEETING of the State Board of Charities was held in Harrisburg, and a report was submitted to the Governor completely exonerating the officials of the Danville Insane Asylum from the charges preferred by W. A. Peart, of Kittaning. Neither the accused nor his witnesses appeared. The report on the Huntingdon Reformatory investigation will be submitted to the Governor this week.

A TERRIFIC rain storm passed over Bedford County. Crops were damaged.

A MEETING of the State Tax Conference was held in Harrisburg.

While delirious, George Gilmore, a gold miner patient in the Williamsport Sanitarium, jumped from a second-story window and received fatal injuries.

THE United Presbyterian Assembly adjourned in Pittsburg to meet in Monmouth, Ill., May 4, 1893. The passage of the Chinese exclusion bill was condemned.

THE Prohibitionists of Pennsylvania met in convention at Scranton and elected delegates to the National Convention at St. Louis.

DEPUTY Attorney General Stranahan has asked the court in Harrisburg for an order restraining the order of Fraternal Guardians, at Philadelphia, from making the first disbursement of over \$100,000 collected by the order.

THE sheet iron, sheet steel and tin plate manufacturers met at Pittsburg and elected officers, including John Jarrett as secretary, and adopted a scale of wages which will be submitted to the Amalgamated Association.

While tending a pug dog Harry Rafferty, a Bridgeport lad, was severely bitten on the nose by the animal.

CAPTAIN I. H. BAKER, an old soldier and former resident of Philadelphia, was killed by a train in Erie.

A NUMBER of Philadelphia business men were entertained by the West Chester Board of Trade in that city.

ISAAC SPEER died in New Castle from a peculiar disease. He was out during a cold storm and afterward was taken ill. His limbs finally became ossified.

While Elias Yeager, of Sulphur Springs, Somerset County, visited a sick friend, his house was entered by thieves, who secured \$1400.

SECRETARY HARRY addressed a letter to the chairman of the several State Committees suggesting that all who have anything to do with the forwarding of certificates of nomination to the State Department should use the official form adopted by the department in the interest of uniformity.

THE Friendship Fire Company, of Harrisburg, dedicated its new engine house with appropriate ceremonies.

CARL GEMS, a German night watchman residing near Pittsburg, has been left a fortune of \$50,000 by his mother, who lived in Wurtemberg, Germany.

A HUNGARIAN wedding in Braddock ended in a free fight. Several persons were injured, and five were arrested.

A. G. SAYLOR, R. M. Root and William Edelman, of Pottstown, have brought suit against S. B. Latschaw, of Ebersdorf. They charge him with obtaining shares of mining stock through deception.

THE war between the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads at Marcus Hook has broken out again. The Pennsylvania people attempted to lay a track when they were resisted and finally driven away by the Reading people. During the melee several persons were hurt.

THE public schools of Erie have been closed on account of an epidemic of diphtheria.

AT the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church the committee to consider "prevalent" evils submitted a report in which reference was made to railroad trains running on Sunday, secret societies, murder, divorce, social evil, church lotteries and gambling. Missions and seminars were also discussed.

While making cake, a cook in the family of Joseph Nesbit, of Ligonier, used arsenic by mistake for baking powder. Several members of the family and some boarders became violently ill after eating the cake.

ADJUTANT GENERAL GREENLAND issued an order disbanding Company I, Eighteenth Regiment, of Pittsburg, and requests the commanding officer to turn over all State property.

SUPERINTENDENT HYATT, of the Danville Insane Hospital was informed by Governor Patton and Attorney General Hensel that the \$70,000 appropriated by the 1889 Legislature for building and furnishing an annex to the hospital is not available, as no work was begun on the structure in 1889.

PITTSBURG, Pottstown, Bethlehem, Allentown and other points in the State were visited by a severe hail and lightning storm.

FOURTEEN Republican conventions were held in Allegheny county. Congressmen Delzell and Stone were renominated, as were Judge Stone and Coroner McDowell. The various legislative and senatorial districts selected their candidates. Mr. Delzell for Senator, secured thirteen of the assembly candidates.

BY an explosion of gas in the Moccasin mine, near Wilkesbarre, two miners were killed and a number of others hurt, three of them fatally.

PREPARATIONS for the dedication of the "High Water Mark" tablet at Gettysburg have been completed. The official program has been announced.

SENATOR RUTAN visited Harrisburg for the purpose of holding a conference with the Attorney General. He proposes to institute legal proceedings against Senator Quay, ex-State Treasurer Boyer and Treasurer Morrison, for alleged violations of law and illegal use of State funds.

IN a street quarrel at Centralia, Patrick Gaispiger stabbed and probably fatally wounded Richard Kane.

THE monument to the unknown victims of the great Johnstown flood was unveiled. Addresses were made by Governor Pattison, ex-Governor Beaver and Flood Commissioner Paden. The monument is of granite, and is surrounded by three figures representing Faith, Hope and Charity.

Announcing a Royal Death.

A quaint ceremony is about to be performed in the German court, the announcement of the death of the late Grand Duke of Hesse, Prince William of Hesse will go to Berlin to hear the news. The Emperor and his court, all in deep mourning, receive the envoy in a room hung with black. The envoy enters with a lugubrious air, and dejectedly announces the demise of his sovereign, while the Emperor deploras the loss and makes a suitable eulogy of the departed one. Then an hour later the Emperor and court, all in gala dress, receive the envoy again, there is much jubilation and joy, and the old adage about "sic king is dead; long live the king," gets a new confirmation.—[Pictorial.]

Mrs. Hawley Chapman, the wife of