

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

A diminution in the sparrow family is reported in all the principal cities of the Union. This is attributed mainly to the use of asphalt pavement and the prompt removal of all refuse therefrom.

A queer industry has sprung up in Michigan, namely, the conversion of pine stumps into shingles. It is stated that stumps of trees which were cut twenty or twenty-five years ago remain enduring and obdurate obstructions to the cultivation of the soil.

The Russian Government labels doctors now by a silver shield, on which there is a raised design of two intertwining serpents. It is to be worn conspicuously on the breast, and it is hoped will prevent the killing of the doctors by the excited peasants, as they have done in epidemics of cholera.

The Agricultural Board of Michigan has asked the Land Commissioner of that State hereafter to sell college lands which are timbered for cash only. Many purchasers are said to have made part payments so as to secure possession of the lands, and after stripping them of timber they make no further payment, but let them revert to the State.

The world shows progress so far as the criminality of women is concerned, in at least two States of the Union. Iowa has 1,145 convicts in State prison, and only thirteen are women. In the prisons of Massachusetts there are now 6,912 men and 1,145 women.

The last report of the Commissioner of Education gives the number of colleges in this country as 484. Of these 188 have no endowment, 54 report endowments of less than \$25,000, while only four have endowments of more than \$5,000,000.

A bicycle has reached Central Africa, and has greatly exercised the minds of the natives. It was at first put down variously as a grinding-mill and a circular saw. The owner, a Tanganyika missionary, gives the people a treat when he dismounts a bearing, and allows them to examine the "bullets," as they call the balls—an eloquent commentary on their education; and when they see him mounted and spinning along their exclamation is, "Ko banda kasikolo," which is alleged to be equivalent to "Good gracious!"

A scheme to increase the efficiency of oil to still the waves of the ocean in a storm has been brought out by William Guthrie of Chicago. His action is based on the argument that if oil has a pacifying effect when distributed on the water in the immediate neighborhood of the ship in trouble, its effect would be magnified if the oil could be applied at a distance all about the ship, thus creating a calm circle in which the ship could ride in safety until the storm had spent its fury.

At the recent banquet of the New Haven Chamber of Commerce, Governor Cooke denied that old story that Connecticut once flooded the market with wooden nutmegs. "If we are not mistaken," says the New Haven Register, "this is the first time any official attempt has been made to relieve the State of this undesirable reputation, and if it is properly followed up will doubtless assume the proportions of a public service. We must confess that until now we had never regarded the tradition other than a fiction. The humor of it has appealed to us, and as we imagined our ancestors being busily employed throughout the day fashioning out of the hearts of old oaks counterfeit nutmegs, it has seemed that their hard, severe life must have had a lot of unsuspected humor in it."

The Canadian engineer possessed of a conscience that is either too conscious of rectitude to anticipate reproach, or too scared to care for it, says he has discovered the origin of forest fires by witnessing one in its very inception. Here is his story: The tree had been partly uprooted by a severe windstorm, and leaned over against the trees nearest to it, some of which happened to be dead. Fierce gusts blew down from the neighboring mountains and caused the branches of the inclined tree to rub with considerable force against those upon which it rested. After the friction thus developed had been kept up for many hours, a very courageous engineer, the dead wood upon which it was exerted first began to glow, then burst into flame, and a fire that swept through miles and miles of valuable timber was the result.

Interesting experiments to test the cost of using electricity for cooking, made by Professor John Price Jackson, are reported in the Boston Transcript. The experiments were practical, the electrical stoves and ovens being used for weeks in preparing the meals for a family of six. It was demonstrated that the average cost per meal for cooking by electricity was 16.6 cents, this including the heating of the water

for washing the dishes. Equally careful experiments with coal and a kitchen range showed the cost of that method of cooking per meal to be 3.15 cents, or about 19 per cent. of the cost of the cooking by electricity. Laundry work for the same family cost 22.7 cents with electricity, and 12.25 cents with coal. Aside from the matter of economy great advantages were found in the use of the electricity, notably the absence of the dirt of coal and ashes, as also of disagreeable gases, and the ease with which a uniform temperature, so desirable in baking, could be maintained.

It will be news to many people that some brands of wheat flour are adulterated, but it will be reassuring to learn on the testimony of a chemist, that the adulterant used is not harmful. The chemist is Professor John M. McCandless, of Atlanta, who has been investigating for the Board of Health of that city. Corn flour is the adulterant used, and Mr. McCandless found this in about one-half of the samples obtained by him in Atlanta. Chemically this so closely resembles wheat flour that there is as yet no chemical method for detecting its presence in wheat flour, or estimating its percentage. It was found, however, by the microscope, appearing as cornstarch. It is not as rich in protein as is wheat flour. Professor McCandless says, but as the greater portion of the people get all the protein they need out of meat, the adulterated flour is practically as good as the pure. Cornstarch is more digestible than wheat starch, so that all the harm done by the adulteration is to the pocket rather than to the health of the community. The profit in the fraud is a good one, as corn flour costs about one cent a pound and wheat flour sells at about three cents a pound.

HANDLING DEAD LETTERS.

An Interesting Division of the Postoffice Department at Washington.

Mary Nimmo Balentine, writing of "Women in the Government Departments" in the Women's Home Companion, says:

"Eight hundred and twenty-two clerks find employment in the Postoffice, of whom one hundred and seventy-seven are women. Their salaries range from nine hundred to eighteen hundred dollars a year, and they are engaged in general clerical work and copying. The most interesting division of the department is the dead-letter office, where about one hundred and twenty-five women are employed. Twenty thousand undelivered letters are received here every day. Each clerk is expected to open two hundred and fifty letters each day, and as many more as she can handle. A record of the daily number examined by each one is kept, and credit for proficiency awarded. Letters containing checks and money are given special attention, and are returned to the sender, if any address can be found; if not, they are recorded and placed on file to await application. Those containing money may be reclaimed in four years, after that time elapses they are sent to the Treasury of the United States, and are often identified and reclaimed after many years. Letters containing no inclosures are returned to the writers if they contain the address; otherwise they are not preserved and no record is kept of them. There is a museum of unmailable articles that have been taken from the mails; its shelves contain every imaginable sort of things, as diverse in character as a washboard and a skeleton."

A Woman.

First and foremost, woman is man's best friend— Because she is his mother. Second, because she is his wife. Because without her, he would be rude, rough and ungodly. Because she can with him endure pain quietly and meet joy gladly. Because she is patient with him in illness, endures his fretfulness and "mothers" him. Because she teaches him the value of gentle words, of kindly thought and of consideration. Because on her breast he can shed tears of repentance, and he is never reminded of them afterward. Because she will stick to a man through good and evil report, and always believe in him if she loves him. Because when he is behaving like a fretful boy—and they all do, you know, at times—with no reason in the world for it, woman's soft word, touch or glance will make him ashamed of himself, as he ought to be.—Farm, Field and Fireside.

Fies That Steal Rides.

A human-like propensity for stealing a ride seems to be possessed by certain insects. In Algeria Rev. A. E. Eaton has noticed flies of the Borborinae group comfortably settled on the prothorax and wing covers of large coprophagous beetles, as many as half a dozen females sometimes securing passage on a single beetle. The beetle's frantic efforts to free itself from its load by rolling over and scraping with its legs are quite useless. Another observer mentions a lacewing fly, which has on one or both wings black raised spots that are evidently tramp flies in the act of traveling on other wings—though not rapid ones—than its own.

Dog's Horseback Ride.

William Hallock, of Huntington, N. J., is recovering from injuries received in a runaway accident. He was accompanied by a little poodle, and the dog jumped on the back of the horse. This frightened the animal and caused him to run away. In turning a corner sharply the wagon was upset, and Hallock was thrown out. He was badly bruised, but not dangerously hurt.—New York Times.

A CLERICAL MIND-READER.

Remarkable Power Exhibited by an Indiana Preacher.

Rev. John Kaufman, whose home is near Rappanee, Elkhart County, Indiana, is said to be endowed with the remarkable faculty of reading the sinful thoughts of those whom he meets. He also preaches while in a somnambulist state and his sermons are attracting widespread attention. A correspondent of a local journal says: "Kaufman is an enigma to himself and friends and many physicians have studied his case without being able to account for the strange faculty he possesses. Before he delivers his wonderful sermons he is in a semi-conscious condition and at their close he collapses and goes into a profound sleep. An attendant who stands near him can generally tell when he is about to need his assistance and catches him as he falls forward insensible. He remains in this condition for several hours. After regaining consciousness he is unable to recall a single word of the eloquent discourse he has given, neither has he the faintest conception as to the time occupied in its delivery. He uses the choicest language in these inspired moments, but when he converses he is slow of speech and by no means pleasing in manner. The change in his voice has puzzled physicians as greatly as the phenomenon of his preaching."

"Kaufman has been in the ministry over twenty years, being first a Baptist, but his strange power was first manifested at a camp meeting held near Terre Haute a few years ago when he became a convert to Methodism. He attended the meeting regularly and toward its close his nervous system gave way and he was confined to his bed several weeks. When he was able to walk about it was noticed that his mental condition had undergone a change. He was transformed from a lively, active, matter-of-fact person to a man of a dreamy cast of mentality. He would sit for hours silently poring over the Bible, without paying the slightest attention to what might be transpiring around him. During these periods it was impossible to engage him in conversation. Pulling him by the arm or pushing up lightly against him would not draw his attention from his dreamy study, and among his friends it was soon understood that while these spells were on him he was not to be interfered with. During one of these reveries he astonished those about him by launching forth in a voice that was strange to them. He repeated his text, and then poured forth a sermon of great power and beauty. His naturally rough tones were changed to a voice of the purest tenor, musical and flexible, and his words flowed with the ease of a polished orator.

"The first sermon preached to members of his household was broken short by his falling forward as if shot. He was assisted to his bed and a physician found him in a deep sleep with his heart beating regularly. It was impossible to awaken him and he slept for several hours. Since then his Sunday morning sermons have been delivered while in the trance condition. He occasionally preaches through the week, but he finds the strain too great, and when he does so is compelled to forego the following Sunday's sermon. A peculiar feature of his case is that this power is exercised only in the morning. In the evenings his sermons are delivered in a rather coarse voice and neither his manner nor matter is then up to the average country minister's. All his mornings except Sundays are given up to his dreamy studies of the Bible. On Sunday he communes with himself until the hour for going to church. He is then accompanied by an attendant who waits close beside him while he preaches. After he reaches the pulpit his motions appear mechanical as if he were acting a part in a religious drama. When he rises to speak he stretches forth his right arm and assumes a rigid position. He remains thus with closed eyes for a few minutes without uttering a sound. Sometimes he prefaces his discourses by singing a hymn, but usually he commences by repeating his text. His delivery at first is in a slow and distinct voice, but as he progresses his utterance is more rapid and his voice searches every cranny of the edifice like the notes of a clarion. He electrifies his congregation and brings tears or smiles from his hearers at will.

"Kaufman declares that he does not know upon what subject he will preach at a given time. The inspiration comes to him, he says, while he stands before the congregation. He has been known to preach powerfully for three hours, but usually his sermons are from an hour to an hour and a half in length. Occasionally he preaches but ten or fifteen minutes. A note of warning runs all through his discourse, and he claims to be able to see great calamities ahead for the country unless the people turn more sincerely to God. He is especially severe in his condemnation of divorce. He likens the divorce laws of the country to a great road smoothly paved, over which an ever-increasing throng is passing to destruction. He claims to be able to see this road in his inspired moments, guarded by long lines of demons of horrible shape and hideous aspect. He can hear their Satanic shrieks and view their mad joy as they leap around the mouth of Hell, where this smooth road lands its victims; and when he paints this scene the blood of the bravest sterner curdles in his veins. In fact, his pictures are sometimes so terrible that many residents refuse to hear him at all. He says the air is peopled with good and bad spirits, that he can see them doing battle for the possession of human souls, and at times he describes these battles as they take place amidst the congregation present. These portrayals of a superhuman scene are so

vividly brought out that their realism is startling. He claims to be able to tell the just from the unjust, and he has been known to expose the dark and evil intentions of members of his congregation so correctly that they have made confession of the facts to him.

"Above the just he can see a pillar of beautiful light which reaches from heaven and rests on the head of the righteous; above the unjust he can see a tower of darkness which overshadows them in gloom. Many thrilling and dramatic scenes have taken place during his sermons. At one time he was preaching on his favorite theme, divorce. He was denouncing the idleness of the calculating scoundrel who deliberately planned the wicked and trumped up charge that branded an innocent wife with shame, merely for the sake of setting himself free in the eyes of the law from his matrimonial obligations. In the sight of God he said these double-eyed scoundrels are infinitely worse than murderers."

"I see their hideous presence here!" he cried, in piercing tones. "There and there the hell-born demons are fighting. The home of the damned yawns frightfully close. Repent, repent, brother, for the time is close at hand!" Just then a loud cry was heard from the rear of the church and a voice rang out 'I do! I do!' The cry came from a puzzled member of the church. He rose and sought to rush to the repentant bench, but fell in the aisle. When he was picked up he was dead. The physicians said that death was caused by sudden and intense excitement. "At another time the preacher was the means of preventing the carrying out of a plan to murder. One of the conspirators, a son of the intended victim, heard him preach. The sermon made such a powerful impression on the young man's mind that he revealed the plot to Kaufman the next day."

A HYPNOTIZED DOG.

Remarkable Freak of a Fox Terrier in Chicago.

In Chicago there is a very wonderful little fox terrier, Esau by name, who shows great intelligence in response to hypnotic suggestion. Dr. Herbert A. Parkyn, his owner, has put the dog under hypnotic influence so many times and with such success that it almost seems as if Esau had a trained mind and a human consciousness.

While he performs readily all the tricks of the best trained dogs, Esau has thirty-four tricks of suggestion which no other dog has learned. He receives instructions through a written paper folded and laid on his nose. The suggestion, for instance, is that he shall at once scamper upstairs to bed. As soon as his nose receives the intelligence he rushes out of the room and upstairs like a wild thing, and scrambles into bed, where he remains until his master suggests to him to return.

When Esau is ill the doctor strokes him gently while he says to him in a hypnotic voice, "you are not suffering." You are better, you are well now," and the dog has lost all traces of indisposition and is as well as ever. "How many people are in the room?" is one of the questions propounded to him, and Esau immediately barks a wrong number.

"Count them yourself," his master says, and the number of barks which he gives always corresponds with the number of people present. "Yawn, Esau," and the dog yawns until the tears stand in his eyes and everybody in the room wants to yawn, too. "Where are your bones, Esau?" the doctor asks, and the dog suggests the ceiling, to indicate his playground on the roof.

"Did you ever let your bones fall off the roof?" is the next question propounded, and Esau sits up and wails "Yes."

Esau says his prayers, standing on his hind legs, with his fore paws on a chair. "You cannot move," says the doctor, and Esau is as immovable as a statue. He kisses his master's fingers one by one, with the touch of a human being. He turns handspins, somersaults and stands on his head. He has enjoyed the enviable distinction of posing for a painter.

Dr. Parkyn has learned enough from his study of the dog to believe that the same course of hypnotic treatment on human beings will result in their higher development. He proposes to take twenty boys from the streets and treat them by his method of suggestion until they are twenty-one years of age. They must not be vicious boys, and they must be musical. He will give them a musical education, and when they reach the age limit furnish each with the musical instrument he desires, and send them out to make their way in the world. He believes that psycho-therapeutics, the influence of mind upon mind, or mind upon matter, as in the case of the animal, will make the boys excellent musicians.

Value of Five-Legged Frogs.

Five-legged frogs, dead and stuffed, are worth \$21 apiece according to a French court's decision. A fish vendor of Lucon found one and took it to the druggist to be stuffed. While they were discussing the price of the operation the druggist's cat ran off with the frog, but her master found it later and presented it to the Nantes Museum. The fish vendor thereupon sued the druggist for fishing the frog, and recovered 105 francs damages.—New York Sun.

Oldest Sovereign.

The oldest temporal sovereign in Europe is Grand Duke Adolph, of Luxemburg, who is eighty years of age.

An Ohio city has made a special police officer of a man who has served two terms in prison.

FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS.

THE FIRST POCKET.

What is this tremendous noise, Willie's coming up the stairs, With unusual clatter; Now he bursts into the room, Noisy as a rocket; Auntie, I am five years old— "And I've got a pocket!"

Eyes as round and bright as stars; Cheeks like apples glowing; Heart that this new treasure fills Quite to overflowing. "Jack may have his squeaking boots; Kate may have her locket; I've got something better yet— I have got a pocket."

All too fresh the joy to make Emptiness a sorrow; Little hand is plump enough To fill it—till to-morrow. And, e'er many days were o'er, Strangest things did stock it; Nothing ever came amiss To this wondrous pocket.

Leather, marbles, bits of string, Liquorice-sticks and candy, Stones, a ball, his pennies, too— It was always handy. And, when Willie's snug in bed, Should you chance to knock it, Sundry treasures rattle out From this crowded pocket.

Sometimes Johnny's borrowed knife Found a place within it; He forgot that he had said: "I want it just a minute." Once the closet key was lost; No one could unlock it; Where do you suppose it was? Down in Willie's pocket!

A COUNTRY WITHOUT PETS.

How much the boys and girls of Japan must miss—they have no pets, not a tabby cat, nor a dog, nor a pink-eyed rabbit, nor a lambkin. In fact, Japan is almost wholly without tame animals. The inhabitants of Japan neither eat beef nor drink milk, and consequently the cow is of no use in their domestic economy. The Japanese do not ride horseback; their two-wheeled vehicles are drawn and their palanquins are carried by porters. Besides, they have neither mules nor other beasts of burden. There are numerous dogs in the country, but they all run wild. As to sheep, goats, and pigs, the Japanese do not raise them. The place of the wool that sheep could furnish is taken with them by silk, which is very cheap, so they do not wear woolen garments. In a Japanese establishment fowls are seen rarely, ducks and pigeons still more seldom; they are raised only to satisfy the demands of foreigners. Some persons in the suburbs of Yedo raise cattle, but they are intended to draw the funeral car when some member of the mikado's family dies.

ANIMALS WITH TRADES.

Whole tribes of birds are musicians, and woodcutters; he cuts down trees and erects houses and dams. The marmot is a civil engineer; he not only builds houses, but constructs aqueducts and drains to keep the dry. The white ants maintain a regular army of soldiers. Wasps are paper manufacturers. Caterpillars are silk spinners. The squirrel is a ferryman; with a chip or piece of bark for a boat and his tail for a sail, he crosses the stream. Dogs, wolves, jackals and many others are hunters. The black bear and the heron are fishermen. The ants are regular day laborers. The monkey is a rope dancer. Bees are geometericians. The cells are so constructed as with the least quantity of material to have the largest spaces and least possible loss of interstice. The mole is a meteorologist. The torpedo, the ray and the electric eel are electricians, says the Philadelphia Inquirer. The nautilus is a navigator; he raises and lowers his sails and casts and weighs anchor and performs other nautical acts.

THE SNAKE'S TAIL.

The Japanese children play some good games that might help American youngsters through a wintry afternoon. The girls, big girls, too, have a very pretty ball game that they call "Yemari," which means handball, but it is not at all the same thing as the handball we know. A number of them stand in a circle, one of them takes the ball—they use one about two inches in diameter—and throws it perpendicularly on the ground. As it rebounds she strikes it back with her open hand. This she does as often as she can do so without moving from her place in the circle, but when it rebounds nearer to some other girl—as it will be sure to do soon—it is the part of that girl to strike it down. So the game goes on till some girl fails to hit when she should, or to make it rebound, and then she is cast out of the circle. The game goes on till only one girl is left, and then she has the honors of the game, "kachi," or victory, as the girls call it.

There is another merry game called "catching the snake's tail." One player is selected to be the catcher, and the rest range themselves in a row, one behind the other, each child putting his or her hands on the shoulders of the child in front of him.

The catcher stands in front of the row some feet away and when the row is ready the game commences and it consists of the catcher's efforts to catch the last child in the row, while the row defends its tail, the snake's tail. This is usually the smallest child playing, for the row is graduated by size, the catcher must not push any more in the row, and the chain

of the row must not be "foul;" when the "tail" is caught that child becomes catcher, and the catcher becomes the tail.

A variation on this game is for the catcher to cry out that he will catch a child. "Which child do you want?" asks the head of the row, and then the catcher says third, or fifth, or whatever he will, and then the row tries to defend that child under the same conditions as before.

KEEPING A SECRET.

It was when Mollie was getting over the measles that mamma told her about Tom's birthday party. It was to be a bicycle party, and the boys were all to bring their bicycles; and Tom's father was going to give him one for a birthday present.

"Oh, goody!" cried Mollie, jumping up and down. "Won't Tom be just too happy for anything?" "Now, Mollie," said mamma, "you must be very careful not to tell Tom anything about it. You mustn't even look as if you knew about it." "Can't I tell anybody? Not even Arabella Maria?" asked Mollie. "Cause I shall surely burst if I don't." "Yes," said mamma, laughing, "You can tell Arabella Maria, but no one else."

This was hard. That very afternoon Tom came rushing in from school, and told Mollie about Billy's new improved safety.

"I'd give something if I just knew I'd get a wheel for my birthday," said he. "But, when father was telling about the scarcity of money last night, I knew that meant no safety for this year."

"Bye low, bye low," sang Mollie to Arabella Maria, who, because she was made of rags, and limber, Mollie loved, as she said she was so nice and "huggy." Mollie kept her eyes shut tight for fear Tom would see a nickel-plated bicycle in them. "Why don't you talk and be a comfort?" demanded Tom. "I suppose, if it was your birthday coming, you wouldn't mind. You'd rather have an old mushy doll like that!" indicating the beloved Arabella Maria with a scornful finger.

This was too much for Mollie to bear. Her eyes flew open with a flash. "It isn't so at all!" she said. "I wouldn't want another doll at all, and I do want a bicycle. Every girl in the block has one but me. And Arabella Maria is not mushy, and she knows a great deal that you would be glad to know."

And then Mollie, feeling that she was getting on dangerous ground, flew upstairs, holding Arabella Maria close up against her mouth.

Uncle Tom and mamma were sitting on the porch quite near the open window, and heard all this conversation. Uncle Tom was much amused, and mamma very proud.

"I can make her tell me," said Uncle Tom.

"Try," said mamma, as she went indoors to toast the muffins for tea. Mollie presently found herself seated on Uncle Tom's knee; and after she had told him all about the measles, and how it was a great surprise to everybody that Arabella Maria didn't take them, "But she's the best thing!" said Mollie. "I told her not to, 'cause I couldn't nurse her; and she didn't."

"What's this about Tom's birthday?" said Uncle Tom. "I want to know about it." But Mollie immediately shut her mouth up tight, and looked up at the sky. "It's a secret," she said finally.

"But not from me, is it? You know he's my namesake; and how do you know I won't get him the same thing?" Mollie looked troubled. "There is a danger," she said; "but, if I should tell you, you might let it out,—not on purpose,—but 'cause it's so hard not to. I don't want to ever have the 'sponsibility of another secret, never!"

"Well, well, and so you can't trust me," said Uncle Tom. "I wouldn't mind trusting you at all, if I hadn't promised I wouldn't tell," said Mollie. "And me and Arabella Maria must keep our word, you see. Now, if it was about my birthday, I could tell you just as well as not, 'cause I wouldn't know—"

But Uncle Tom was laughing so hard that Mollie stopped. "Good for you, Mollie," he said; "you're a trump!"

Mollie didn't know at all what he meant, but she was much relieved that he was not offended. When Tom's birthday, with the party, the safety and all, really came, it was hard to tell which was the happier, Tom or Mollie.

Every time that Tom felt things boiling within him to such an extent that he couldn't possibly stand it another minute, he would rush out on the lawn, and look at his new wheel, and say: "Hurrah! She's a daisy!" and turn somersaults until he felt better. At the same time Mollie would rush after Arabella Maria, and, with a rapturous squeeze would say: "Aren't we glad we didn't tell, though, 'cause he's so happy over the 'prise."

By and by they all went out for a spin around the block; and there, among the shining wheels, was a dear little one, whom no one claimed. Tom picked up a card on the handlebar, and read:

"For Mollie and Arabella Maria, two young women who know how to keep a secret from even Uncle Tom."

"Oh, oh!" said Mollie, dancing up and down. "Arabella Maria, we're the happiest girls in this world, I know."

In 1896 carriages valued at \$294,000 were imported into South Africa. America got \$164,000 of that sum, England \$118,000 and Germany \$6,000.

A man in Chestertown, Md., has a pair of golden fawn rabbits, with ears that measure twenty-two inches from tip to tip.