

The Methodist Episcopal church in the United States increased its membership in 1896 by 67,467 souls, and in 1897 by 19,500.

Though the French are the greatest mushroom-eaters in the world, cases of poisoning very rarely occur, owing to the fact that almost all the mushrooms eaten are raised.

The decision of the Constitutional Convention of Louisiana to discontinue French as one of the official languages of the state will surprise many people who did not know that it has been an official language.

An Industrial Development company is being formed in Richmond, Va., with a capital of not less than \$50,000, its object being to bring new business enterprises to the city and infuse new life into those already established by judicious loans of money when needed.

A pair of scales, much like those of the modern pharmacist, is among the multitude of objects discovered this year in the excavations about thirty miles from Thebes, and recently exhibited in London. The scales are finely finished, having a beam four and one-half inches long.

The Whitehorn (Col.) News has this item in its "society" column: "A lot of squint-eyed squaws held a powwow at Martini's Sunday night. Razzle-dazzle was the game. At midnight a kettle of dog soup was served, which was presided over by Dull Knife, Battle Ax, Ogama, Afraid-of-Work and Often Hungry."

The statistics of the National Guard of the several states of the Union, compiled by Adjutant-General Corbin, show that we have now a citizen soldiery of about 170,000 for national defense, maintained practically without cost to the nation in ordinary times. It is capable of almost indefinite expansion by proper encouragement, and it can be trained to a higher degree of proficiency by a judicious cultivation of the military spirit.

Of the many Armenians who have come to this country in the past ten years, the larger part have seemingly made their home in New England. They are successful as farmers and farm laborers, but have made their greatest hit as domestic servants. Their employers recommend them as being polite, silent, industrious and, above all, as being excellent cooks. The Armenians have a school of cooking of their own which has modified that of Persia, Turkey, Greece and, apparently, that of Italy.

Hardly a day passes without adding to the list of benefits bestowed on mankind by the bicycle. The British Medical Journal cites a case of a lady who having been advised to take a fortnight's change of air to get rid of the effects of influenza spent her vacation largely on the wheel, averaging fifty miles or so a day. As a result she has no more influenza, but she has a heart which on the slightest exertion rises to 120 beats a minute, and if she could have her choice now she would rather have the influenza. Recent discoveries in Egypt show that the science of medicine had reached a high state of cultivation ten thousand years ago, but it is vain to hope that it will ever be well enough understood to prevent lovely woman from demoralizing her system when drawn within the fascination of the wheel.

The Louisville Courier-Journal says: Some interesting figures have lately been compiled by Mr. E. L. Powers of Chicago, showing the extent to which the system of illuminating towns and cities by means of the electric light has grown in recent years. We cite the figures for this section merely. In fifteen southern states there are at this time 401 electric plants operated by private corporations, firms and individuals. The capital stock represented amounts to \$34,752,225, while the power generated aggregates 141,450 horse power. Not less than 37,976 arc lights and 996,770 incandescent lights are furnished. But these figures do not embrace the total number of electric light plants in this section. In addition to those operated by private corporations, firms and individuals, there are also seventy electric light plants operated by municipalities. These represent 9890 horse power, and furnish 4256 arc lights and 68,933 incandescent lights. Since barely twenty years have passed since the glare of the electric light first made its advent, these figures show that rapid progress during that time has been made in this section by Edison's wonderful invention.

The Japanese cabinet has decided to pursue a passive policy, refraining from action in the present crisis in China.

The probability of a coalition of European powers as against the United States is given no credence whatever in diplomatic circles.

Not a case of lynching has taken place in Texas since the passing of the anti-lynching law, one chief feature in which is that no officer can ever hold office again in case a prisoner is taken from him.

When Governor Brady of Alaska was asked recently why he lived in such an out-of-the-way place, he replied: "I can get more of the good things of life in Alaska with a similar amount of effort than in any other place I have ever been in."

There were 1281 fires calling for the services of the fire department in Boston in 1897 and \$661,203 worth of property was destroyed. There were 157 false alarms in the same time. Eighty-six per cent. of the fires were confined to the buildings in which they originated.

England is not the only country in which the poorer classes of women work at starvation wages. In Australia, according to Miss Edwards, secretary to the Working and Factory-Girls' club at Sydney, "the condition of working-women and girls becomes harder every year."

The real estate exempt from taxation in the borough of Brooklyn, in Greater New York, includes 440 churches, 131 schools, 73 fire houses, and 28 police stations of the assessed value of \$85,000,000. The exempt church property in Manhattan and the Bronx amounts to \$60,000,000.

A French scientific journal says the consumption of tobacco is decreasing in that country, being at the present time about two pounds a head of the population annually, whereas in Holland it is seven pounds, in the United States it is five pounds, in Belgium and Germany three pounds, in Austria-Hungary two and one-half pounds and in Canada two and one-half pounds.

President Eliot of Harvard in his annual report, makes some significant remarks regarding college athletics. "It is very unlikely," he says "that a student who takes an active part in athletic sports can win good standing as a scholar, but, on the other hand, a smaller proportion of the athletes get put on probation at Harvard college than of other students. This remark is not true of scientific students. The evil of excessive training has not been cured. The baseball team of last spring was distinctly overworked and half the crew gave out in the four-mile race. In all probability the nervous strain resulting from prolonged training, many exciting contests and an anxious sense of responsibility has not been sufficiently considered." President Eliot is not a prejudiced critic of athletics, but believes in a sensible amount of outdoor exercise and field games. Yet in common with the educators, he is coming to believe that the physical practice of college undergraduates must be judiciously regulated by the college authorities.

The scientific world awaits with interest another expected eruption of the great volcano of Kilauea, in Hawaii, which, it is prophesied, will equal the unusual outbreak of ten years ago. The lake of molten lava is now only about 300 feet below the rim of the crater, and it is rising at the rate of about 100 feet in a week. If it rises above this rim the lava will pour over the surrounding country in a river of molten matter making its way through the forest and down to the sea. It is only within the last month that any clear view has been possible of this lake of fire in the crater. Before the dense smoke arose in great masses from the bottom of the crater, estimated to be seven hundred feet below the rim. This smoke was so stifling that one could get no view of the working of the hidden forces below. But when the bed of the crater began to break up and the masses of lava were fused by the inner heat, then the smoke was dispelled and the lake of fire was seen. This was a wonderful transformation scene, the smoke vanishing, the fountains of flaming lava beginning to play. These spurting lava fountains, shooting up 50 or 100 feet, have been playing periodically for the last three weeks. At night all the ridges heated to a bright red are plainly visible, and when the fountain plays, the scene is one of nature's fireworks, unparalleled by any fire inventions of man.

BERRYING.

My Love went berrying
Where brooks were merrying,
And wild wings ferrying
Heav'n's ambrosy:
The wild flowers blessed her,
My dearest Hester,
The winds caressed her,
The sunbeams kissed.

I followed, carrying
Her basket; varying
Fond hopes of marrying
With hopes denied;
Both late and early
She deemed me surly,
So bowed her curly
Fair head and sighed.

"The skies look lowly;
It will be showery;
No longer flowery
The way I find.
No use in going!
'Twill soon be snowing
If you keep growing
Much more unkind."

COUSIN MORRIS.

To awaken at a second-rate London hotel with a splitting headache, knowing you have come to the end of your resources through folly and extravagance, is not a pleasant reflection. And Morris Seymour sighed, but could blame none but himself.

He was an American, well educated, 28 years of age, a sturdy, good-looking young man, whose chief fault was too much generosity, which his London acquaintances took every advantage of as long as his money lasted. After a light breakfast Morris proceeded to a newspaper office.

One of the clerks (with whom he was slightly acquainted) advised trying advertising. This suggestion was not only acceptable, but put to the test, and it did not take Morris long to write out the following:

"Situation Wanted.—By capable newspaper clerk, whose many qualifications include honesty of purpose and strict attention to business where employer's interests are concerned. Apply _____."

The clerk affixed the number T 830. Punctually at noon the next day Morris presented his ticket at the newspaper office, receiving an answer. Judge of his astonishment when he read the following:

"X Y Z: Meet me tonight at 8 o'clock at the entrance to St. Catherine's docks. Fail at your peril. This is to our mutual advantage."

Examining the envelope he discovered that it was addressed "T 320," but the figure 3 looked more like an 8. So it was a mistake; he had been given some one else's letter. Out of mere curiosity he made a copy and, procuring an envelope, correctly re-addressed it, putting it in the basket on the counter.

Looking through the personal columns of the paper, he came across the following:

X. Y. Z.—Where can I see you? Answer at once to T 320.

So here was the solution. Morris had been so preoccupied reading this communication that he had not noticed a young lady standing by the counter, who was visibly surprised when she noticed the envelope he had placed in the basket; she then produced a ticket and this same letter was safely placed in her pocket, while now, standing unobserved in an isolated part of the office, she was watching him in a peculiar and expressive manner.

He was too much disappointed to notice anyone and felt like giving way to despair, so tried to walk off his depression and must have gone a considerable distance, for, looking around, he found himself in the vicinity of Russell square. While meditating whether to return, a young lady who was passing gave a faint cry and half sunk to the footpath, evidently overtaken by illness. Morris hastened to her assistance.

"Would you help me home?" she said, in a weak voice, indicating one of the largest houses.

"Certainly," and, taking hold of her arm, he half carried, half led her across the square to the palatial mansion indicated, giving a vigorous pull to the bell. The door was immediately opened by a footman, who called to a trim maid, requesting Morris to wait a few moments, ushering him into a small apartment. The room was magnificently furnished, there being an abundance of old china, valuable curios and beautiful oil paintings.

He was not left long in suspense. An old gentleman entered quietly, carefully closing the door. He was trembling with excitement, and, holding up a warning finger, exclaimed:

"Morris, why have you caused me all this trouble? I'm perfectly innocent. A few more weeks of this worry will kill me. No explanation now. When I die you will not be forgotten. I never thought Ebenezer's only son would have threatened me."

"Two questions only for the present: When did you leave New York? And what steamer did you come by?"

To say that he was astonished at being called by his Christian name would be a poor way of describing his feelings, but his reply was straightforward.

"I left New York, sir, three weeks ago today on board the B—; but I fear you are laboring under some unfortunate mistake."

"Hush; not another word," said the old gentleman, producing a roll of banknotes, which he thrust into his hands. "Put these in your pocket quickly. Some of the servants might overhear us. Ah, here comes Alice," and the young lady entered the room, looking none the worse for her slight faintness.

"Alice, my dear, kiss Cousin Morris; he is coming back this evening to stay with us."

ARCADY.

A soft wind murmurs through the waving wheat.
The lowing cattle gather on the lea,
The peaceful bleatings of the gentle sheep,
Wake the faint echoes of sweet Arcady.

Above, a heron slowly wings its flight,
Slightly a fox slips from its hidden lair,—
An antlered stag upon the mountain's height,
Tales his head, and sniffs the summer air.

The sun sinks down behind the distant hills;
The shadows lengthen in the afterglow,
And with the sighing of the whip-poor-will
Comes curfew tolling from the tower below.

Nature has sunk into the arms of night,
And in the lowlands over marsh and fen,
Will-o'-the-wisp displays his elfin light,
Hiding a moment to appear again.

The faint stars mirrored in the broad lagoon
Lighten the blackness of night's somber shroud,
As slowly o'er the mountain tops, the moon
Bursts into beauty from behind a cloud.

—H. A. Webster.

HUMOROUS.

People who take offense usually find that there is plenty of it to be had.

Ethel—You will not accept that conceited fop. Gladys—No; I love another.

"I thought Scribblers' dean forbade him doing any bran work."
"Well, he's only writing a society novel."

Miss Oldmayde—Jack Butted made me a marriage proposal last night, Miss Pert—When does the marriage take place?

Jack (sentimentally)—My love for you is as pure as the snow. Jennie (practically)—I hope it will last a bit longer than.

Little Clarence—Pa, what is the difference between firmness and obstinacy? Mr. Callipers—Mirely a matter of sex, my son.

Brown (reading the news from China)—How would you pronounce this name? Jones—Liao-Tung? I guess you don't pronounce this—you yodel it.

Ned—I met Miss Up-to-Date yesterday, and I didn't finish so incredulous. She swallowed everything I said. Jack—What did you say? Ned—Ice cream soda.

Erie Central—Confidentially, Tom, how much does it cost you a year to live? Tom Ticker—Well, my life insurance premiums come to about two hundred dollars.

Bluster—What do you mean by coming into my office uninvited and leaving the door wide open? Pedlar—I wanted to see if you want to buy a "please-shut-the-door" sign.

Bilks—Hello! where are you going with that door mat? Gilks—Taking it to the assay office. A friend of mine, just returned from the Klondike, called on me and wiped his feet on it.

Mrs. Skinfitt—Here is a ha'penny for you, my man; tell me how you came to be so poor. Mendicant—Ah, mum! I was like you—too fond of giving large sums of money to the poor!

"Yes, grandma, when I graduate, I intend following a literary career—write for money, you know." "Why, Willie, my dear, you haven't done anything else since you've been at college."

She—It is very good of you to say you will come so far to call, but be sure to send word when, lest we should be out. He—Oh, I assure you I shouldn't in the least mind if I found you not at home.

Mrs. Bowers angrily—Before we were married you said you were not worthy of my love. Mr. Bowers (weakly)—Yesh, m' dear. Mrs. Bowers—Well, I see no necessity of your trying to prove it.

Chollie—I can't understand why Miss Crumley got so indignant when I asked her to sing that song about—er—mawble hals, you know. Yabsley—You doleful idiot, her father used to drive a wagon for a stoneyard.

Papa—I did the Count an injustice. I thought he was a chump. Mama—And you have changed your opinion? Papa—Yes, indeed! You should have seen him kick when I tried to work off some worthless railroad stocks as part of the marriage settlement.

The Elephant—You impudent little scamp! You ought to be an organ-grinder's cashier instead of a circus performer. The Monkey—Well, the manager doesn't seem to think so. You'll notice that my name on the circus posters is in larger type than yours.

"Here," roared the old judge to his son, studying law with him, "you told me you had read this work on evidence, and the leaves are not cut."
"Used X rays," rawned the versatile son; and the judge clucked with delight as he thought what a lawyer the boy would make.

A Suggestion.

A professor of philosophy in a certain Rhensian town received a large parcel a few days ago containing six boxes of cigars, accompanied by the following note: "We beg leave to send you six boxes of our excellent cigars. We have no doubt that you will be pleased with the parcel and will recommend us to your friends. Kindly remit us the amount of the invoice—6 marks per box—by postal order." To this the philosopher replied immediately: "I have the honor to send you herewith a dozen dissertations, which will no doubt please you. Should you desire any more I hold them at your disposal. The price is three marks per copy." By return post the professor received the following laconic epistle: "Kindly return our cigars. Inclosed find cost of carriage and packing. We are sending back your dissertations."—London News.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

All the land above sea level would not fill up more than one-third of the Atlantic ocean.

There are 110 mountains in Colorado whose peaks are over 12,000 feet above the ocean level.

Chocolate is still used in the interior of South America for a currency, as are coconuts and eggs.

A one-legged knife grinder in Philadelphia has taught a Newfoundland dog to turn his grindstone.

Sweden exports one billion boxes of matches yearly, and has the oldest match factory in the world.

The highest waterfall in the world is Cholock cascade, at Yosemite, Cal., which is 2635 feet high, or just half a mile.

Not within living memory has there been known so abnormally snowless a winter in European Russia as the past season.

New Jersey was the first state permitting the right of suffrage to women; this was done nearly one hundred years ago.

A curious fact has been noted by Arctic travelers—snow when at a very low temperature absorbs moisture and dries garments.

How great a havoc is created in France among birds, is shown by the fact that during Christmas week, at the central market, 114,000 larks were sold.

There is an immense garden in China that embraces an area of fifty thousand square miles. It is all meadow land, and is filled with lakes, ponds and canals.

A French journal states that among the recent uses which have been discovered for acetylene gas is a motor which has special advantages for use in automobile vehicles.

The leaf of a creeping moss found in the West Indies, known as the "life plant," is absolutely indestructible by any means except immersion in boiling water or the application of a red hot iron.

The biggest rope ever used for haulage purposes has just been made for a district subway in Glasgow, Scotland, it being seven miles long, four and one-half inches in diameter and weighs nearly sixty tons.

Argentina's farmers, encouraged by the improved prices for wheat, increased their acreage enough to have 40,000,000 or 50,000,000 bushels of wheat to sell this year, an increase of 75 to 100 per cent. over recent years.

It is said that half the gold fish kept in glass vessels die because they cannot endure the light. This can be avoided by so screening a part of the vessel with plants or otherwise that the fish can hide their heads in the shadow.

Moscow, Prussia, has a hospital large enough to hold seven thousand persons. It was founded in 1764, and at present takes in children at the rate of forty a day, or about fifteen thousand a year. There are twenty-six physicians and about nine hundred nurses.