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## ENTERTAINING MISCELLANY

VARIOUS SUBJECTS CLEVERLY TREATED

### Items of Interest.

Bees can fly faster over short distances, up to three miles, than can pigeons.

Only seven per cent. of the men in the French army exceed five feet eight inches in height.

Though the name of Siberia is still popularly accepted as a synonym for all that is arctic and sterile, it is becoming clearer every year that few regions of the earth are more capable of producing immense stores of human food.

Japan has bought and is buying large numbers of Normandy horses for the new cavalry regiments of the empire. Prize winners at trotting races are preferred. Many horses of the Breton breed are also being purchased for the Japanese service.

Snow evaporates, under favorable conditions, without melting. That process is not noticeable in ordinary weather in this part of the country, but when frozen ground is whitened by a light fall of dry snow and the temperature remains well below the freezing point it can be seen that the snow gradually vanishes.

While most of the flesh eating plants are found in the tropics, the butterwort, sundew and toothwort, inhabitants of the central zone, will eat any kind of insect they can get hold of. If a fly alights on the leaf, the leaf folds up and incloses its victim. An acid flows out from the plant, and in a minute or two, when the leaf has unfolded, the fly has disappeared. It literally has been eaten up.

The highest percentage of rented houses in the United States is found in Washington, D. C. Three-fourths of the private families in that city live in rented homes. Next to the District of Columbia the State with the largest percentage of rented homes is Rhode Island, and after that South Carolina. The Southern States all rank high as renters because of the negroes. The smallest percentage of rented homes is found in North Dakota, South Dakota and Oklahoma.

A few wagon roads in the United States still maintain toll gates. One of these is in the Shenandoah Valley, in Virginia. This pike runs for ninety-four miles through the heart of Western Virginia, from Winchester to Staunton. It is operated by the Valley Turnpike Company and has eighteen toll gates located at intervals of five miles. The toll for a wagon and team is ten cents at the full gates and five cents at the half gates. The Three Chop road is another old Virginia highway that is still operated under the toll gate system. This primitive highway was surveyed by Lafayette and got the name it now bears because the woodsmen were told to chop three times on trees in blazing the trail.

The public revenue of Sweden is \$47,496,000 and of Norway \$23,247,000. Sweden has 7,636 miles of railway and Norway has 1,481.

Sweden's average ad valorem duty on imports is 10.60 per cent., and Norway's is 11.46 per cent.

Sweden's public debt is \$92,000,000, and Norway's \$71,000,000. The annual interest charge is \$3,248,000 for Sweden and \$2,301,000 for Norway. Sweden has \$379,000,000 on deposit in its commercial and savings banks, and Norway has \$160,000,000.

### The Tree of Fire.

In the tropical regions of America and the West Indian Islands there grows a tree which, when in flower,

forms a splendid ornament to the landscape. Its average height is from twenty to thirty feet, and its stem is free from branches till about the head, where they are very thickly grouped.

Looked at from below, you can see nothing but these boughs and their densely packed leaves. Viewed from above, on some rising ground, you can see nothing but a mass of flowers of a red as deep as that of a scarlet geranium. When the sun shines on a number of these magnificent trees the effect is grand beyond description. No wonder the natives call it the tree of fire.

### How the Boers Do Their Courting.

The Boers have a novel procedure in the matter of their lovemaking.

A young man, having, of course, asked permission of his father to court the hand and heart of some neighboring damsel, proceeds to purchase the most loudly-colored and decorated saddle-cloth for his horse that he can possibly find. He will spend large sums on this article of equine adornment, and one knowing the country can never mistake a young Boer going out courting. Mounted on his most spirited steed, he approaches the house of the father of the ladylover.

Unlike the youth of more civilized life, he avoids the lady and seeks her father, from whom he reverentially asks permission to court his daughter. The old man returns no answer, but consults his wife, and the youth joins the young folks. No more notice is taken of him during the day, but if his request be agreeable to the parents, when the hour for retiring comes the mother solemnly approaches the young man and maiden with a long tallow candle in her hand. This she places on the table, lights, and, bidding the couple an affectionate good-night, retires. This is the silent signal to the lover that his suit is successful.

### Marie Theresa's Cross.

The most prized decoration in Austria corresponds to the British Victoria Cross, and its value arises from the rigorous conditions for obtaining it, and the fidelity with which they have been observed. It is known as the Maria Theresa Cross, and a few days ago there occurred the 150th anniversary of its foundation. Since that time there have been only 833 recipients.

"It shall be an inviolable rule," says the foundation statue, "That no person, whoever he may be, shall be admitted to the Order for any other consideration than long service or wounds received before the enemy, and not for any reasons of birth, favour, or influence." "We ourselves join hands on this subject," adds the Empress-founder. The recipients of the Cross are enabled ipso facto.

Every winter, as soon as the Neva at St. Petersburg is frozen over, a service of electric cars is started to run across it on the ice.

At the Baldwin Locomotive Works, Philadelphia, the clerks are so expert in handing out wages in pay-day that 18,000 men receive their pay in less than twenty minutes.

The biggest leaves in the world are those of the Inaj palm, which grows on the banks of the Amazon. They reach a length of 30ft. to 50ft., and are from 10ft. to 12ft. in breadth.

As showing the enormous interest taken in Limerick competitions, the Postmaster-General in England states that during August, September, and October, 1906, the total number of six-penny postal orders sold was 311,000. In the corresponding three months of last year the number was 577,000, or eighteen times as many. This means an immense profit to the Post Office.

## NATURE'S OWN REMEDY

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