

## Miscellaneous Items.

### THE EDELWEISS.

The curious and interesting Alpine plant, edelweiss, which travelers in Switzerland have so often carried away for its local and poetic associations, and have as uniformly failed in the attempt to cultivate it, has at last been reduced to cultivation by an English gardener. He treats the plant as a biennial, and raises a batch of seedlings every year. This year the seed was ripe July 25, and was immediately sown in a peat soil covered with a little silver sand. Ordinary seed pans were used. In a fortnight many seedling plants were above the surface and growing satisfactorily. The soil in the seed plants is kept moist, and the plants well shaded from the sun under the plant stage of a greenhouse. The young plants are kept in the pans all winter, then pricked off singly into small pots in March. In May they are planted out in a rock garden, where they grow freely and bloom profusely. Sand-stone appears to suit the edelweiss well; the roots seem to fasten themselves to it and produce vigorous plants. A position in the open sun appears to be best suited in England, to the well-being of the plant. In this country more shade would probably be necessary.

The demand for edelweiss has been so great among travelers in the Alps that several cantons have prohibited the sale of the plants, lest they should be entirely exterminated.

### THE COST OF BOMBARDMENT.

Speaking of the monetary cost of bombarding the Alexandria forts the London Daily News says that every round fired from the four 80 ton guns of the Inflexible cost the nation £25 16s (about \$125) per gun. The 25-ton guns, of which the Alexandra carries two, the Monarch four and the Téméraire four cost £7 per round per gun. The 18-ton guns, of which the Alexandra carries ten, the Sultan eight, the Superb sixteen, and the Téméraire four, cost £5 5s. per round per gun. The 12-ton guns of which the Invincible carries ten, the Monarch two, and the Sultan four, cost £3 12s. per round per gun. The Penelope, which alone carries 9-ton guns, has eight of them which are discharged at a cost of £2 15s. per round per gun. The Monarch and the Bittern each fired a 6½-ton gun, the cost being £1 15s. per round per gun. The Beacon and the Cygnet have two 64-pounders each, the cost of discharging which is 18s. per pound per gun. The Penelope carries three 40-pounders, the Beacon two 40-pounders, and the Bittern two 40-pounders, the cost of discharging which was just 12s. per round per gun.

### AN INTERESTING RELIC.

Some recent excavations in Berkley Square, London, England, brought to light one of those curious relics of Old London which are every now and then being exposed in its streets. In the sixteenth century, London was supplied with water from the Thames by means of wooden pipes, invented by one Peter Morris, or Maurice, a Dutchman, who, in 1580, obtained a right from the corporation to erect machinery to supply what many householders had been compelled to purchase, a tankard at a time, from the water-bearers. Maurice's works were erected at Old London Bridge, and his water pipes were hollowed out of the stems of trees, tightly fitted into each other, much after the manner of the common sewer pipe of to-day. Some wooden piping of the kind devised by this ingenious Dutchman has recently been dug up in Berkley Square, but it was probably a part of the New River Company, which so far adopted Maurice's plan that it originally supplied water through pipes formed of the stems of small elm trees, denuded of bark, drilled through the center and cut to lengths of about 6 feet. Some 19 years ago a considerable length of this wooden piping was exhumed in Pall Mall.

### GOOD SERVANTS BUT BAD MASTERS.

With every new invention for the comfort and convenience of humanity, come new perils. Steam, that drags or drives us over the world at faster rates than the most imaginative of our grandfathers dreamt of, sometime hurries us out of it with the sweeping destruction of a plague. Gas, that turns our nights to day, bursting its bonds, asphyxiates us, and spreads flame in every direction. Within a few months numerous accidents, many of them very grave, caused by uncontrolled electric force

have been reported. Cases of permanent injury or serious wounds of long duration, inflicted by the impalpable and invisible fluid have occurred everywhere, on land and at sea. A sailor seizes the two wires of an electric lighting contrivance as it is being lowered into the hold of a ship and is instantly killed. The tragedy at Newport, is another terrible instance. Recently fires caused by the wires of electric telegraph, telephone or illuminating apparatus, have brought the matter to the attention of fire engineers and underwriters, who unite in warning people of the frightful risks that attend the use of these conveniences of modern life. The principal sources of danger, it appears, are wires not thoroughly insulated. The electric spark has been known to leave the wire at a point where the insulation was broken, and, leaping to a bit of metal for which it has an affinity, a nail in a roof, for instance, has set fire to a building. The dangers are increased by the necessity, especially in the case of the electric light, of employing strong batteries from which the wires are heavily charged with electricity. The only means of protection that have suggested themselves to electricians and others interested in the matter are the complete separation of electric light wires from those connecting telegraph apparatus, the thorough insulation of all wires, and an arrangement on the exterior of buildings for an absolute "cut-out," so that firemen, when brought in contact with the fires, may effectually prevent them for the time from conveying injury to life or property. The electricians, fire engineers and insurance experts, however, have yet to try how far by burying the wires the danger may be averted. The risk to life from lightning striking exposed wires is so well known that the lessees of telephones are cautioned against using them during a thunder storm, and devices for arresting the spark are set up in all telegraph stations. Certainly, risk from this source would be considerably lessened were the wires put beyond the reach of natural electricity.

### HINTS TO SWIMMERS.

When a swimmer gets chilled the blood ceases to circulate in the fingers, the finger nails become a deathly white color, the lips turn blue, and should he persist in staying in the water after these symptoms develop he is sure to have cramps. So long as the swimmer can discern spots on his finger nails he knows that his blood is in good order, and that he is safe and free from chills. I have been remarkably free from chills, and feel most at ease when in the salt water under a hot sun. Salt water seems to attract the heat, and, no matter what the temperature of the water, under these circumstances I feel warm. I have on some occasions swum so as to keep my body under water, but even in such instances on coming out I have found my back and limbs blistered. This shows the penetration of the heat from the rays of the sun on the water. On one occasion, since I was here last, I swum for £400 at Scarborough, staying in the water seventy-four hours. I use a preparation of porpoise oil, which I rub all over my body, even my face. The oil fills up the pores of the skin and keeps the salt water from permeating my vitals. All professionals now use oil.—CAPTAIN WEBB, in *Boston Herald*.

### OSCAR WILDE.

In a recent lecture, Mr. Oscar Wilde, the popular exponent of "Utterism," did not fail to show up some of our short comings in matters of taste. He described his impressions of many American houses, ill designed, decorated shabbily and in bad taste, and filled with furniture that was not honestly made and was out of character. His picture of cheerless rows of houses, glaring bill boards and muddy streets was equally graphic. He pointed out that this was the condition in America, whereas in England the artists and the handicraftsmen are brought together to their mutual profit. It is to be regretted that ridicule stifles many of the good things he advocates. As he justly declared, the two greatest schools of art in the world had their origin with the handicraftsman. Arguing from this, he pleaded for the establishment of a school of design in each city. He asserted that if decoration is a fine art, all the arts are fine arts. The real test of the workman is not his industry or his earnestness, but his power of designing. The surroundings of the handicraftsman in America are now meaningless architecture, sombre dress of men and women, and a lack of a beautiful national life. He would not have us build another Pisa, surrounding and inspiring Michael Angelo; neither would he have us bring back the thirteenth century, for