

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

LEPROSY IN THE UNITED STATES.

A telegram tells us that two loathsome cases of leprosy are known to medical men near Rothsay, Minnesota. Several cases are reported from Philadelphia. We have been told over and over again that the plague has been prevalent for some years in parts of California and Oregon, as well as in British Columbia and New Brunswick. From Europe also a cry of alarm comes with regard to the spread of this most hideous of all the maladies that afflict humanity. The London Times and St. James Budget have lately raised a warning voice against it, emphasized by correspondents. Arcedeon Wright, in the Times, agrees with the Anti-Chinese agitators everywhere, that the dreadful malady is spread everywhere by Chinese emigrants. Not only have they brought it to America but they have also carried it to the Cape of Good Hope, Australia, the Sandwich Islands and various parts of Europe, or it has been carried there by Europeans who have been in contact with them. There are numerous lepers in the hospitals of Paris and several in those of London, Dublin and Glasgow. Specialists in skin diseases say that the malady itself has of late years increased in activity and it is constantly increasing the area of its dreadful influence. It is suggested that any accidental circumstance which might develop its virulence still more would produce a world-wide epidemic. "The train is laid and needs only to be fired." While no immediate danger need be apprehended, we should not shut our eyes to the risk of so dreadful a calamity.

THE LIFE-SAVING SERVICE.

The annual report of the United States Life Saving Service for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1886, has been published. From it we learn that the Life-Saving Establishments embraced at the close of the last fiscal year 211 stations, distributed as follows: 165 on the Atlantic, 38 on the lakes, 7 on the Pacific, and 1 on the Falls of the Ohio at Louisville, Ky. The number of disasters to documented vessels reported was 322, having on board 2,726 persons of whom 2,699 were saved and 27 lost. These vessels were valued at \$4,428,330 and that of their cargoes \$2,073,805, a total value of \$6,502,135; of this amount \$5,073,078 was saved, and \$1,429,057 lost. The number of vessels totally lost was 88. Besides the foregoing there were 145 casualties to smaller craft, such as sail-boats, row boats, etc., on which there were 348 persons, of whom 346 were saved and 2 lost. Since the introduction of the present system in 1871 to the close of the fiscal year the total number of disasters was 3,385; total value of vessels and cargoes involved \$58,377,249; total value of property saved \$41,449,257; number of persons involved 29,983; saved 23,317. Of those lost 183 persons were lost at the wrecks of the steamers Huron and Metropolis and also fourteen other persons really not chargeable to the service.

SELLING REFORM.

A letter from Big Lake, Mo., called attention to the fact that the Lime Kiln Club had abolished the "old o'clock, on o'clock, etc." and asked why it should not be removed. O'Grady, O'Leary, O'Brien, etc. "I don't know why it shouldn't," replied the president. Mr. Brien has no more right to a "big O" before his name than Mr. Shin or Mr. Bebee. Dar an mo' sense in a "Mc" or an "O' befo" a man's name than dar is befo a steamboat or a locomotive. No clock is an o'clock any mo' dan a watch an o'clock. Dis club hasn't got de time just now, befo de winter am ober we propose to turn our attenthun to de English language and reconstruct it o' a cash basis. Let us now blow out de lamps an' go home."

THE ASTORS.

Old John Jacob Astor left \$20,000,000 and during the 40 years that have elapsed since then the estate has probably increased to \$120,000,000. In other words, John Jacob and William are now each worth \$60,000,000. The senior Astor had about 40 acres of wild land up town, which then were only an expense. At present, however, they are worth nearly \$1,000,000 the acre. The Astor house was then rented for \$26,000, but it now brings nearly \$100,000, and the two brothers each own about five thousand houses, bringing an aggregate rent of \$3,000,000.

A STUPENDOUS RANCH.

A cattle ranch is a stupendous thing, scarcely to be portrayed on paper in the mere enumeration of figures and numbers. When I say that one firm of cattle kings—that of Lux & Miller—own 162,000 domestic animals, in neat cattle, sheep and pigs, with two great cattle ranches, and eight main farms, besides 20,000 acres in grain; comprising in all 700,000 acres, or 109 miles of land, the mind can scarcely take it in. Perhaps it may give a clearer idea to say that they own all the land on the west bank of the San Joaquin River for fifty miles and nearly all the opposite side; and it is said of them that in driving their beef cattle to market in San Francisco, for over a hundred miles they drive them over their own land, and "put up" each night at one of their own ranches.—Cosmopolitan.

THE JOGGIN'S RAFT.

Action has been taken promptly to diminish as far as possible the risks to vessels from the enormous timber raft which went adrift near Nantucket shoals. A vessel from the Brooklyn Navy yard started out promptly to search for the raft and tow it into port, and a revenue cutter will also be despatched to the scene of danger. Shipowners and business men interested in commerce have given immediate attention to this important matter, and their representations have induced the authorities to take steps to prevent a threatened ocean disaster. The Egyptian obelisk now standing in London went adrift in a storm in the Bay of Biscay some years ago, but was recovered without accident. It is to be hoped that equal good fortune will attend the efforts to bring safely into port the huge timber hulk which is now tossing about on the ocean.—N. Y. Tribune.

THE PARIS BON MARCHE.

Madame Boucicaut, the chief proprietor of the Paris Bon Marche, one of the largest general stores in the world, died the other day and left \$3,000,000, to be divided among all her employes who had been in her service 10 years. For years her husband had

made the welfare of her 3,000 employes his constant care, and after his death his wife continued the same policy. Every employe received a share of the profits, the co-operative principal being carried so far that the immense store was governed by a board of the higher employes. All employes, from the partners to the porters, were fed in the establishment and on precisely the same fare. Amusements, books, medical attendance, etc., etc., were provided for the employes, and while the establishment made great profits, its owners were loved and admired by their employes and highly esteemed by all others. Madame B. left \$12,000,000, \$2,000,000 of which will be devoted to the founding of a hospital.

POPULATION OF THE WORLD.

The eminent statistician Prof. Levasseur, has prepared for the International Statistical Institute an elaborate series of tables relating to the populations of the various continents and countries. He estimates the population of the world as 1,483,000,000. One difficulty which has always been found in making such an estimate is the uncertainty with regard to the population of China, Japan and Africa. Prof. Levasseur, however, has based his figures, in the case of the former country, upon the latest official reports, making its population about 400,000,000, which is the figure adopted by other statisticians. To Africa he gives a population of 197,000,000. From his tables we learn that nearly two-thirds of the human race are grouped together on about one-twelfth of the land area of the globe, namely, in China, Japan, India and the best parts of Europe. This fact is full of meaning for America.

A SAD EXPERIENCE.

A Belfast man is being laughed at considerably these days, and our readers in this Christmas time would do well to profit by his experience. He wished to make his wife a present of a muff, and took home two for her to select from, one cheap and the other a high priced article. Thinking to have a little fun at the expense of his better half he changed the labels. The cheap one was much admired, but seeing the price on the ticket, the wife said she could not afford that and would take the other. It looks a little as though the joke was on the man of the house.—Bangor Commercial.

TREATMENT OF CRIMINALS.

The treatment of criminals is becoming more and more humane. In old days human ingenuity was taxed with a view to devising the most painful punishments. For criminals not under sentence of death, the rack, the thumbscrew, the hot iron, and instruments of a like nature were prescribed; while in order to end life, the wheel, the fire, the slowly closing room, and a variety of tortures too horrible to think of were introduced. All these terrors have now been abandoned, and the gallows in most countries, with the guillotine in France, are the rewards of the murderer. But these punishments, swift though they may be performed, are not considered to be suited to this age. And as a result electricity is being introduced in order that the life which must be given for a life may be rendered up painlessly. Dr. Talmage recently advocated the substitution of electricity for the rope, and now a New York commission on the subject of capital punishment recommends that the Empire State adopt the electrical shock as a means for the removal of murderers. Electricity is painless, and is more rapid than even the nerve communication with the brain.

A FRUIT WHICH BRITISH COLUMBIA CAN GROW.

Mr. E. Greyell, one of Chilliwack's most enterprising and wealthy farmers, called at this office and laid a package of prunes, grown by him, on our table. It is only a few days since the Columbian called the attention of fruit-growers in this province to the fact that prunes could be successfully grown along the coast, and now the assertion has been practically demonstrated. The prunes grown by Mr. Greyell are of the Russian variety; they are large, well-formed, fully ripened, and equal in flavour to any cooking prunes on the market. The tree which bore them is eight years old and stands the climate fully as well as the plum tree. A frost, which occurred in the earlier part of the season, damaged the plums on the neighbouring trees, but did not injure the prunes in the least. Mr. Greyell is making arrangements to plant five acres of prunes next spring.

GERMANY'S GRIEF.

The general grief of the German people for the affliction that has fallen upon the Crown Prince must touch American hearts. It is not merely the patriotic sentiment that nearly all Germans feel toward the royal family, but it is a distinct personal affection springing from the Prince's qualities of mind and heart. Not only has he shown himself brave and skilful as a soldier—this seems almost inevitable to a Hohenzollern—but, while he has borne himself in his difficult and delicate position as heir-apparent with simple dignity, he has become known as deeply imbued with liberal principles and actuated by a profound and affectionate confidence in the German people. The hopes of those who long to see the arbitrary features of both the Prussian and the German Government disappear, and greater freedom given to the judgment, the aspirations, and the convictions of the nation, have been to a great degree centred upon the Crown Prince. There will be no lack of loyalty to his son, should he come to the throne, but it will be the loyalty of principle rather than the hopeful and eager fidelity of affectionate confidence, for young William is in respect to the things that have attached the Germans most closely to his father, quite his opposite.—N. Y. Times.

A Startling Discovery.

A startling and important discovery was made when, after long and patient experiments, the combination of NERVILINE was reached. A grand victory, indeed, for the suffering have an ever ready, prompt, efficient, and cheap remedy at hand. Do you know that for 10 cents you can buy a trial bottle of Polson's Nerviline and test its great power over pain of every description? Polson's Nerviline cures chills, pain in the stomach, side, and back, rheumatism; in fact all pain. Sold by druggists and country dealers.

A bayonet charge and its results are thus described by Chinese author:—"Soldier he come on, he come on, he come on quite near; we go 'way. How can two men stand on one spot, so?"

The Irish Schoolmaster.

The Irish schoolmaster, as Mr. Heimick has depicted in a frequent figure in the Ireland of the past and of the present. With the education of national schools his quiet, pleasant personality passed away, and he has left no successor. He was a bachelor—if not vowed to celibacy, perhaps terrified by his daily exposure to temptations of matrimony, with little results, or perhaps, to take a higher view, his pupils supplied for him family life, and his vocation was one admitted of no rivalship.

He kept a little lamp of learning in a very modest way, unlike his successors, with their debating societies, stone school-houses; the national school in an Irish village usually shows the constabulary barrack the distance of a gant and ten foot, how different! I observed Latin grammar, a Greek lexicon and similar aids, a "Reading Manual," or, as the Irish peasant prefers to call it, a "Readam-daisy" (this is proper spelling, of course, for I go only upon popular evidence); these and little more. In summer his academy was at least of a blooming hedge, facing the wind and sheltered by an overhanging thorn. In winter the school had a shelter of some such modest cabin as Heimick shows us, where, round a fire on a grateless hearth, the boys sat, warming their spirits at the fire of knowledge, and bringing their shins a high degree of mottledness by the aid of the actual fire.

Sprung from the people, the Irish schoolmaster was of the people, only overtopping them in their estimation, and yet more in his own, by the many of conscious learning. To their heartiness at night his welcome was a warm; two places of honor were there, one for the other for the wandering minstrel it was a time of widest hospitality, a time when the nightly box of strabud had an extra handful of meal dropped in. The man coming over the hill. Our schoolmaster was affable despite his attainment he would read the paper aloud with stately pomposity, expounding as he went, would listen amiably to and praise fiddler's music, and the boys' and girls' songs, and the old people's stories, and was himself chanted, in a high cracked voice, where classical and mythological poems of ancient Greece and Rome figured only side by side with moderns, for your high schoolmaster was above all things a classicist. Nor was his learning a thing to despise. At a time when education was the lower Irish a forbidden fruit, and ill-gotten by the vision of the future, who will say how many lips athirst for knowledge drank and found refreshment at the humble fountain? The Irish as a people hunger after learning, and value its possession dearly. It is recorded that at an earlier period still, the hedge schoolmaster's academy was often the churchyard, the inscriptions on the grave-stones serving for books, and a piece of chalk and the stones or a pencil and slate. The Munster peasant then, though ignorant of English, could often read Latin like a citizen of old Rome and was able to converse in the tongue of Cicero and Virgil with any kindly intellectual English tourist whom chance might send his way. It is interesting to find how many of the hedge schoolmasters were also poets. The native Irish poets of the last century were nearly always recruited from this profession and very often poets of a high order. This is not surprising, perhaps, because the schoolmaster was an abstract kind of being, living apart from his fellow-creatures, and with seldom the companionship of even the kindly domestic animals. English or anything else modern he despised; hence the English spoken by him and taught to his scholars was of a very inflated kind, its merit being estimated by the number of its syllables. He left this inheritance to the peasantry of yesterday and to-day.

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