AGRICULTURAL.

The Flax Folly.

An immense amount of rot is being published by newspapers as to the possibility of the farmers becoming rich by raising flax. Mr. Edgar L. Wakeman, for instance, writing from Belfast, Ireland, tells the American farmers that they ought to raise "1,000,000 acres of flax, which would produce 15,000,000 bushels of seed and 2,500,000 tons of flax straw worth $50,000,000, and from this 500,000 tons of flax fibre would be obtained, worth $100,000,000."

This kind of nonsense is taken up by the newspapers and there is great surprise that the farmer does not at once rush into this lucrative business. Every farmer, however, knows that he must sow flax either for the fibre or the seed; if for the seed he must sow it thin; if for the fibre he must sow it thick. When sown for seed fifteen bushels is a big crop. Sixteen, seventeen or eighteen bushels is a rare crop, while the average is not above ten. And yet, according to the romancer, the farmers are expected to obtain fifty per cent. more than an average crop, and in addition to this the enormous yield of two and one-half tons of straw to the acre, worth $20 per ton. We assure Mr. Wakeman that he can purchase all the straw he wants for less than $5 a ton, delivered at the nearest railroad depot.

If flax is sown for the fibre a seed crop cannot be expected, but if the fibre is to be worth $20 a ton it must be pulled by hand, and rotted. Every man of sense knows this is not practicable. Flax culture, for the sake of the fibre, is a success in a few counties in the north of Ireland, and no where else that we know of. We were impressed when a mere boy, and we think of it every time we read this trash, with the wonderful difference between two samples of flax, one prepared by our Irish grandmother within a few miles of Belfast, and the other by our American grandmother within thirty miles of Pittsburg. With a climate never hot, never cold, never dry, and hence growing a fibre of extraordinary firmness and strength, with labor in abundance at a shilling a day, to pull flax by hand and rot it in ponds and spread it out on the grass, and thus prepare it for the spindle and the loom, flax fibre culture is a success in Ireland. It is a dismal failure in America. If there were a heavy tariff on jute butts and a penitentiary open for the manufacturer who would form a trust on manufactured flax, there would be a market at probably $5 per ton for the coarse straw from flax raised for the seed, and in that case there would be a fair profit in flax growing. Under present conditions there is no money in the crop except on new breaking, or some other specially favorable circumstances. We have tried it, and have raised as high as sixteen bushels per acre, but we never expect to sow it again. It is an exceedingly hazardous crop when raised for seed, is very hard on the land and damaging to the next crop.

Reasons Why Blinkers Harm Instead of Benefit Horses.

When a horse is used for the saddle no one thinks of meddling with his eyes, and we allow the animal to use them freely, as nature has directed. But no sooner do we put the same animal into the harness than we think ourselves bound to fasten a black leather flap over each of his eyes, so as to prevent him from seeing objects at his sides, and to limit his view to those which are in his immediate front. This is done with the very best intentions, the object being to save him from being frightened by startling and unwonted sights, and only to leave a sufficiency of vision wherewith to guide his step. Herein, as in feeding and stabling the horse, man judges the animal by himself, forgetting, or rather having failed to notice, that the eyes of the horse are exceedingly unlike our own. Our eyes are set in the front of our heads so that if blinkers were fastened to our temples our range of vision would be but slightly limited. But the eyes of the horse are placed on the sides of the head, and are rather prominent, so that the animal can not only see on either side, but by rolling his eyes backwards, as we see in a vicious horse, can see objects almost in his immediate rear. The effect of the blinker is both mentally and physically injurious to the horse. In the first place, especially when large and brought near the eyes, it has the effect of heating them and hindering the free passage of air over them. In the next place, it causes the eyes to be always directed forward, and thus produces a most injurious strain on the delicate muscles. We know how a painful sensation is felt when we are obliged to strain our eyes either backward or upward for any length of time, and the horse suffers no less inconvenience when it is forced to keep its eyes continually strained forward.

The worst examples of the blinker that I have ever seen were in the United States, where the blinkers (or "blinders" as they are there named) are often brought so closely together in front by means of a strap and buckle that a mere narrow strip, barely half an inch in width, is left for vision. This again is done with the best intentions, the object being to save the animal from being afflicted with snow-blindness. Now the horse's eyes are in many respects different from our's, and are not affected, as in the case without us, by the vast expanses of dazzling snow which are rendered even more dazzling by the clear atmosphere and brilliant sunshine of America. One of its safeguards lies in the remarkable structure which is popularly termed the "haw," and scientifically the "nictitating membrane." This is a sort of third eyelid set beneath the true eyelids, and capable of being drawn at will over the eyeball, thus performing the double duty of shielding the eye from the direct glare of light and clearing its surface from dust or any other foreign substance. The membrane is seen in perfection in the birds of prey, so that the proverbial statement that the eagle trains itself to gaze at the midday sun has some foundation in fact.

Dr Hammond's gaurded endorsement of Brown-Sequard's elixir of life has yet had no appreciable effect upon the price of coffins. Undertakers are cheerful folks, and will hold up prices to the very last moment.

William Mooney, of West Pike, Potter County, Pa., has a peculiar head of hair. When a storm approaches every hair stands out straight, and as he wears his hair very long he is quite a ridiculous sight. On that account he never leaves the house when it is cloudy.

MAKING A PORTRAIT.

Pictures "Painted from Life" Are Not Always What the Purchaser Thinks He Pays For.

"How long does it take you to paint an oil portrait?"

The question was addressed to a well-known artist in his studio the other day by a prospective customer in hearing of a "Times" reporter.

"That depends on the size, style, and, of course, the price of the picture," was the answer.

"A head and bust life-size, for instance?"

"I can let you have it in about a month or five weeks from the time I receive the commission."

"How many sittings will you require?"

"About twenty, if I paint entirely from life."

The prospective customer's face lengthened at this announcement, for he is a busy man and could scarcely spare so much time from his office. He said so.

"Well," returned the painter, "we can get along with three very nicely. You will have to go with me to the photographer's where I will pose you exactly as I want to paint you, and from the photo so obtained I can work until the picture is nearly finished. Then two or three sittings for color, expression, and finishing touches will be all that is necessary."

This proved satisfactory, and, financial details having been arranged, the customer took his departure.

"That's the way we do nowadays," said the artist, turning to "The Times" man. "Now, that duffer thinks that I am going to work a solid month on his picture for $100."

"Well, won't you?" asked the reporter, in some surprise.

"Not exactly, dear boy. How many hours do you suppose that piece of work will actually take?"

"I haven't the least idea. I have always thought it was a work of weeks until this minute."

The artist laughed and then entered into the details of how portraits really are painted. He said: "A bust portrait like this, painted from life, as it is called, but in reality from a photograph, takes about fifteen hours in all to finish. Come into my workshop and I will show you exactly how the better kinds of portraits are usually painted.

"Now, you see, I have here a magic lantern. It is a very good one and the lenses do not 'discort,' which is a technical phrase for 'knocking things silly.' In front of it there is a solidly constructed easel on which I tack my canvas before it is secured to the stretcher. From the cabinet photo of my subject I have a small negative made, which is put into the lantern and the image is projected onto the canvas."

To illustrate this point a negative was put into the slide, the lamp was lighted, and there was the image as described on the piece of canvas. The artist continued:

"I now take a lead-pencil, and, following the lines given by the lantern image, I draw my picture. This is purely a mechanical process and any person who has even the slightest knowledge of drawing can do it. So you see instead of spending two sittings at least in sketching my subject, and then having to make many corrections in the drawing during the first three paintings, I make my sketch, and make it correctly too, in about ten minutes."

"How do you get the sketch exactly life-size?"

"By taking a card, usually the photograph to be used, and measuring from the canthus or inner corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth and marking the distance with a lead pencil on the card. This is the flattest surface in the face, and therefore easily measured. When the image is thrown on the canvas the lantern is moved forward or back until the distance from the corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth in the imagine agrees with the measurement on the card."

"So you practically take a man's measure for his picture?"

"Exactly. Now for the next step. The canvas with the pencil sketch on it is tacked on to the stretcher, and then the painting begins. This part of the work is also much simplified compared with the old-fashioned methods. With raw umber and white the 'first painting' is made, which is an exact copy of the photograph. In fact, this first painting might be mistaken for an enlarged photo except for the fact that it is very vigorous and the brush work tells all the way through it. This takes about five hours. After the first painting is dry, say by the next day, if the weather be favorable, the second painting goes on. This gives the flesh colors in a somewhat crude form. These colors are composed of tints mixed from indian red, caledonian brown, light red, vermillion Naples yellow, yellow ochre, cobalt blue, ebony black, and flake white. The painting is not solid, it is scumbled on principally. After this is dry we usually have a couple of sittings to correct the color by means of glazes of transparent color, rose madder, raw sienna, light red, etc."

"Don't the people suspect that they are not being painted from life?"

"Never. When they first see the canvas the only part of it that is covered is the head and a little rim of the background, about two or three inches wide, around it. The drapery is all in pencil outline on the white canvas. Oh, no; the idea of a 'fake' never enters their minds. Some men go much farther than this. They get a solar print—that is, an enlarged photo—put on canvas and then the process is easier still. The print is made on the canvas itself and a quick man can finish such a portrait in about eight hours. The disadvantage of it is that the soda and other chemicals can not be got completely out of the print, and after the picture has been on the wall a few years it is likely to either darken gradually until the face is darkened out, from the nitrate of silver working through and combining with the white lead, or the soda keeps on eating away the image underneath until the strong shadows are eaten away and the whole affair looks like a Chinese god."

"What other schemes are there?"

"Well, the simplest and quickest way to paint an oil portrait is to get a life-sized enlargement made on ordinary albumenized or photo paper. This must be carefully glued on to a piece of rough canvas which has been tacked to a stretcher. When it is dry, the paper being quite thin, all the grain of the canvas shows through quite nicely. Then the surface must be prepared for the oil paint, either by a thorough sizing of glue or a coating of white shellac varnish. After this is dry a glaze of pink madder and raw sienna is rubbed into the face carefully. This gives the deep shadows and half-tones very nearly the appearance of a fairly well painted portrait. Then the deepest shadows must be gone over with appropriate tints and the lights must be painted in. The draperies and background are painted solidly, and the picture can be easily turned out in four or five hours. The edges of the paper are carefully trimmed before the background is painted and then 'loaded' with the background color to hide the fact that there is any paper pasted on the canvas This kind of picture is much more durable than the solar print on canvas.

"Are all artists up to these dodges?"

"Well, I should say so! I don't know a portrait painter in the city who does not insist on having a photograph. The excuse is usually that he must have something to go by if the 'inspiration' comes on him while his subject is absent—just as if a man must be taken with fits of some kind before he can paint! Yes, I think I may safely say that they all use the magic-lantern or solar camera for their drawing, except in rare cases when the sitter insists on an absolute life sketch. Most of them could not make a likeness that way."

"How about foreign artists?"

"They are just as wicked as we are. For instance, there is a great Parisian artist who comes over to New York every year or two and taps the American public for $40 000 or $50,000. He gets $2,000 for a three quarter length life-size portrait, which is usually 36x54 inches. He paints entirely from the photograph and does his drawing by the lantern or camera. He is a wonderful painter. He never spends more than from nine to twelve hours on a portrait, and the eastern people are so crazy to get his work that he always leaves a number of commissions unfilled. And, mind you, he won't paint everybody. He chooses his subjects, and only accepts a commission when he approves of the subject either for beauty, character, or downright homeliness."

Remarking that $166 80 per hour was better pay than the average newspaper man can earn, the reporter went sadly away from the studio with his oil-portrait idol shattered and fallen to the ground.—[Chicago Times.

Chinese Floating Gardens.

In a recent number of the China "Review," Dr. MacGowan describes the manner in which floating fields and gardens are formed in China. In the month of April a bamboo raft ten feet to twelve feet long and about half as broad is prepared. The poles are lashed together with interstices of an inch between each. Over this a layer of straw an inch thick is spread, and then a coating two inches thick of adhesive mud taken from the bottom of a canal or pond, which receives the seed. The raft is moored to the bank in still water, and requires no further attention. The straw soon gives way and the soil also, the roots drawing support from the water alone. In about twenty days the raft becomes covered with the creeper (Ipomœa reptans), and its stems and roots are gathered for cooking. In autumn its small white petals and yellow stamens, nestling among the round leaves, presents a very pretty appearance. In some places marshy land is profitably cultivated in this manner. Besides these floating vegetable gardens there are also floating rice fields. Upon rafts constructed as above weeds and adherent mud were placed as a flooring, and when the rice shoots were ready for transplanting they were placed in the floating soil, which being adhesive and held in place by weed roots, the plants were maintained in position throughout the season. The rice thus planted ripened in from sixty to seventy, in place of 100 days. The rafts are cabled to the shore, floating on lakes, pools, or sluggish streams. These floating fields served to avert famines, whether by drought or flood. When other fields were submerged and their crops sodden or rotten, these floated and flourished, and when a drought prevailed they subsided with the falling water, and while the soil around was arid advanced to maturity. Agricultural treatiises contain plates representing rows of extensive rice-fields moored to sturdy trees on the banks of rivers or lakes which existed formerly in the lacustrine regions of the Lower Yangtse and Yellow Rivers.

Nothing the Matter with Old Maids.

In truth there is nothing the matter with old maids. There are occasions when their sweet restfulness and unencumbered sympathy seems like gifts from Heaven. I journeyed in the same car with one only the other day. It was hot and dusty, and there were unexplained delays that made every one feel out of sorts. The sleeping coach was crowded with ladies and children. The children made incessant demands for drinks of water, and the mothers looked worried and worn out before half the journey was done. It was a day of discomfort and turmoil, and a night of horror, when the mothers and children and nurses began to stow themselves away for sleep. Through it all a sweet maiden lady sat serene and calm. She gently fanned herself with an air of contentment and peacefully read her book, and now and then surveyed the prospect without and within. Occasionally she did some kind little thing to a passing child or gave a crushed-out looking mother a sympathetic and encouraging smile.

Nothing in life for an old maid? Why, bless my soul, even the men that day looked upon this calmly cool maiden lady, and wished in their hearts that they were old maids. For my part, I have never been to a ball or a dinner, or on sea or land, or on mountain top or beach, without finding somewhere a lovely, charming, intelligent old maid who was a delight to every one about her.—[Louisville Courier Journal.

Egg-shell was once used in medical prescriptions. When calcined at a low red-heat, the shells afford a very pure form of carbonate of lime.

The citizens of Chicago of British birth, being about to have a grand parade and picnic, have decided that no other flag but the Stars and Stripes shall be carried in the procession. This regulation has given offence to one of the Canadian societies, the members of which refuse to parade under any other flag than the Union Jack. The Chicago News, commenting upon the incident says:—"The thousands who flock to our shores to enjoy our material prosperity and our political freedom should in return prove devoted citizens or exhibit at least a decent measure of loyalty. There is no room in the great American family for those who give superior allegiance to the English union jack, to the green flag of Erin, the tricolor of France, or any other emblem of national sovereignty."

LADIES WHO ARE SHAVED.

Many Instances of Pretty Women Who Have Distinct Mustaches and Beards.

The case of old Mrs. Miller, the Flushing lady who died Friday and bequeathed to her barber $500, brings out some curious information about women who shave. Speaking of the matter to a "Mercury" representative, Prof. J. W. Newberth, of Brooklyn, said: "The general public would be surprised to learn that hundreds of women are compelled to call in a barber two or three times a week. I could give you the names of at least fifty women who shave, and among them are several society ladies. You may have often noticed women with hair on the upper lip. Well, there's a woman—a young lady, I should say—who resides on Herkimer street, whom I shave twice a week. She can raise a mustache as quick as I can, and raise a better one, too. This lady is well known to the upper ten of the Twenty-fourth ward of Brooklyn, and is very handsome. For a long time she shaved herself, but finally she was introduced to me through a friend of mine—a lady customer—and ever since that time I have shaved her regularly twice a week. Her mother was also troubled with an overgrowth of hair on her face, but she allows it to grow. The result is that the old lady has a great deal better mustache than the majority of dudes can raise, and she says it adds to her beauty. Her sister, a young woman of 16, is also raising a mustache. She is a very pretty girl, but will soon have to shave, as her upper lip is getting very black. This girl is also raising side whiskers, but she arranges her hair so that a person would hardly recognize that fact. But the elder sister, who is a regular customer of mine, has a very strong growth of beard. In fact if she were to let it grow she would have a finer beard than Barnum's bearded lady. See is a nice girl just the same, highly educated, and a good musician, but the growth of hair on her face worries her awfully, as she is about to be married. She becomes more alarmed as her wedding day approaches, and often asks me if I will be able to shave her after her marriage without permitting her husband to know it. I quiet her fears in this direction by telling her that she may then call at my residence. There I can shave her without any one knowing it. You see, I have three married women who call there now regularly every week, and no one is the wiser.

"I used to shave a Brooklyn policeman's wife every week, but she has moved downtown and has gone to another barber's. As the fellows would say, she has taken her cup away. I have one woman whom I meet at the house of a friend of hers three times a week. She is about the only really wealthy customer I have, and she pays 50 cents for every shave. She has auburn hair, and if her mustache was allowed to grow it would be sandy. You may see a barber, or a dozen of them, who will tell you that they get big prices for shaving women, and that all the women they shave are handsome and wealthy. If they tell you this they are romancing, for the majority of women whom I shave are comely, but not handsome. There are many of them young, but few very pretty. None of them come to my shop, although on one occasion I have had occasion to shave a woman in one of my regular shop chairs. It was one night last winter. A lady, heavily veiled, called at the shop about 8 o'clock in the evening. She asked to see me, and then told me that she wanted to have some superficial hair removed from the face. But she would not get shaved until the shop was vacant and I locked the door and pulled down the shades. Then the woman removed her veil and hat. To my surprise when I glanced at her I saw that she had quite a heavy mustache. I told her to be seated and she lay back in the chair like a man. I quickly shaved her, and when I got through she handed me a crisp dollar bill and told me that she didn't want any change. There's a barber down on Fulton Street who makes a practice of shaving women. He had at one time at least fifty regular female customers. Some of them he shaved every day, while others came but once a week. He has a few wealthy female customers, who drive to his establishment in their fancy coaches to 'have their hair dressed,' as they say. But they go there simply for the purpose of getting shaved. He has a ladies' parlor for shaving in, and is about the only regular barber for women in the city, excepting, probably, another man on Myrtle avenue. The latter party well understands his business. On the first floor of his establishment he has a tonsorial parlor for gentlemen, and on the floor above he has a ladies' parlor. I guess he has about thirty regular female customers who get shaved.

"I tell you it is a difficult job to shave a woman, as she kicks like a steer if the razor is not just in A 1 condition. When a barber once shaves a woman he will keep her custom as long as she lives convenient to his establishment. I had a young man in my employ about three years ago who married a young woman whom I used to shave, and it was while visiting her house for the purpose of shaving her that he made her acquaintance. The young man does not live with his wife now, and the neighbors are wondering what she will do next."

The reporter next visited Prof. Pieterkowsky, at his establishment on Myrtle avenue, and found him stropping a razor. The professor is a tall, good-looking gentleman, with flowing Dundreary whiskers, slightly streaked with gray. "Yes," he remarked to the reporter, "I have an establishment for shaving ladies up-stairs, and business is pretty good just now. I keep four assistants up there, and guarantee the ladies the best of politeness and attention. I charge only 10 cents for shaving them, unless they want bay rum, and then, like the men, I charge them 15 cents. I have some fine-looking ladies, and some not so good-looking, but what difference does that make? Thousands of women shave themselves, and hundreds get shaved by regular barbers

"There is no disgrace in a woman getting shaved, but none of them want the others to see them while the razor is passing over their face. They come in and sit in the waiting-room, saying that they want their hair banged, and that they are in no hurry, but a few of them know what the others come for, and they don't mind it. You see, I make known the fact that I shave women, and have several hundred hand-bills distributed every day. You see," concluded Prof. Pieterkowsky, "I state on my bills that I have four hair-cutters. Well, they are, because I have to trim the hair of every lady who calls here. To tell you the truth about it, the women come here to get shaved under the pretense of getting their hair trimmed. I have several customers who never saw my shop, but when they want my services they send me a note, telling me to call on a special day, as they want their hair trimmed. Of course I know my business and I take a couple of razors with me. Some of this sort of customers pay me by the month—that is, allow a bill to run up—while others pay me as soon as I get through with my work. I won't mention the streets on which I have lady customers, because that would ruin my business. I never tell any one the names or addresses of any ladies I shave. There isn't a lady comes to my place but what I have to talk to, but I keep them apart, so that one customer does not know the other's business. But say, if you want to find out any more about women who shave just drop into some cutlery establishment and ask the proprietor how many women buy razors. I'll bet he'll tell you that twice as many women buy them as men. Didn't you ever notice the pretty plush shaving sets on sale in our leading dry goods establishments and art-rooms? And didn't you ever see women buying them under the pretense that they were presents for male friends? Well, the fact is they purchase the shaving sets for themselves and use them while safely locked up in their bathrooms at their own homes. What a woman don't know ain't worth knowing."—[New York Mercury.

Paris from the Top of the Eiffel Tower.

M. E. W. Sherwood writes to the New York "World" from Paris as follows:—We have been on the top of the Eiffel tower, and have made the ascent with so much pleasure in an American lift that I feel impelled to notice this great triumph of American skill in a somewhat lengthy manner. We seated ourselves in a capacious car, which held fifty people, and in one minute were up 300 feet. Here we got out and took a look at Paris. This view has already been seen from this elevation by 800,000 people and described by as many more, so perhaps it would be a threadbare theme to go further than to say that it is one of the most beautiful and entrancing views of one of the most beautiful and entrancing of all cities. We saw the windings of the Seine through the gardens and busy marts; we realized all that Hausman and Louis Napoleon did to open up the streets for the conquering cannon; we saw the historic outline of the grand Notre Dame, the fairy-like uplifted campanile of the Saint Chapelle, the grandeur of the Arc de Triomphe, and the wide extent of the Bois, the heights of Montmartre, and the answering peak of Mont St. Valerien, the beautiful terrace of St. Cloud, and at our feet the great exposition. What a position in which to study geography! All the noble bridges, the grand mass of the Louvre, the chateaux, gardens, and parks. It is superb.

We left this satisfaction for another ride upward, and in a similar car we ascended 500 feet more. In this ascent we were tilted back in our seats as if in a rocking chair. In the next car we were tilted a little forward, but neither position was so marked as to be painful or disagreeable; yet this little inclination has been necessitated by the construction of this immense tower, and the awful consideration of danger and the protection against sudden catastrophe, a dizzy fall.

Arrived at the top we found a different view; 975 feet above the world people become pigmies—a sort of suggestion of how small earthly things will look when we get still higher, perhaps. At this height the Arc de Triomphe has become a little toy, and the churches are like those in the Dutch boxes of villages. It was all map-like and indefinite; the people were crawling ants; all that looked large had disappeared, excepting a balloon, which was our contemporary.

What a motley group we were on the top of the tower! A hundred Congo sailors, black as midnight, were being taken about; there were Turks, Arabs, and Chinese, and other less familiar nationalities; many Americans and many English, the whole clientele of a French school, M. Eiffel himself and the German ambassador, and I cannot tell how many more.

Touching Discovery.

In May last the workmen who are digging the foundations for the new law courts in Rome discovered a sarcophagus buried thirty feet below the surface. Immediately the telephone called to the spot the members of the Archæological Commission, scientific and literary men, who watch with jealous care all the excavations made in the Eternal City. Under their direction it was carefully raised and opened.

Within lay the skeleton of a young girl, with the remains of the linen in which she had been wrapped, some brown leaves from the myrtle wreath with which, emblematic of her youth, she had been crowned in death.

On her hands were four rings, of which one was the double betrothal ring of plain gold, and another with Filetus, the name of her betrothed, engraved upon it. A large and most exquisite amethyst brooch, in Etruscan setting of the finest work, carved amber pins, and a gold necklet with white small pendants were lying about.

But what is most strange, as being almost unique, was a doll of oak wood, beautifully carved, the joints articulated so that legs and hands move on sockets, the hands and feet daintily cut with small, delicate nails. The features and the hair were carved out in most minute and careful way, the hair waving low on the forehead, and being bound with a fillet.

On the outside of the sarcophagus was sculptured her name, Tryphæna Creperia, and a touching scene, doubtless faithfully representing her parting with her parents. She is lying on a low bed, and striving to raise herself on her left arm to speak to her heartbroken father, who stands leaning on the bedstead, his head bowed down with grief, while her mother sits on the bed, her head covered, weeping.

It seems but yesterday, so natural is the scene, and yet it was nearly eighteen centuries ago that these stricken parents laid so tenderly away their dearly-loved daughter, with her ornaments and her doll.

The marriage-rate appears to be on the decline not only in Britain but also throughout Europe. In England and Wales bachelors now marry at a mean age of 26 2 years, and spinsters at 24 6 years, the age at marriage exhibiting a tendency to increase. The average number of births to a marriage is for England and Wales about 4½, the average for Italy being 5 15, Prussia 4 92, Austria 3 73, and France 3 42. In England and Wales the average duration of married life has been computed at about 27 years.