

The Destructive White Ant.

The Scientific American has an interesting article on the noted termite (improperly called white ant), which works such fearful havoc with wood-work of all kinds in many warm countries, rendering necessary we believe in many districts the use of metal for railroad ties and similar purposes. The writer speaks in large part from personal observation, which gives his remarks special value. We copy the bulk of the article, condensing somewhat:

The ravages of the so-called white ant can hardly be comprehended by those who have not seen the results. These are so disproportionate to the size and apparent powers of the insect, that no one can be blamed for doubting, except on the most positive evidence. I remember once, in the south of China, having occasion to move a huge hardwood chest filled with books. I called two men to lift the chest. They took it by its iron handles, and with one accord bent to it and lifted. It was like a signal for dissolution. It seemed as if force of habit alone could have held the handles in their places, for the instant they were tugged at they came away, and the chest crumbled and fell to the floor a heap of dust and irregular, thread-like shreds of wood. The books proved to have suffered in the same fashion. Some of them crumbled on being taken up, and others remained so thoroughly riddled with holes as to be nothing better than a fragile lacework of paper.

If the insect be destroyed only at times during its varied existence, it might be possible to guard against it better; but when it is considered that as larva, pupa, and perfect insect, it is equally destructive, it will be understood what a pest it must be. Camphor is a shield against it, and camphor-wood chests are therefore used for keeping valuable articles in, but even the genuine camphor wood is not always strong enough to keep away the ravenous thing, and it has to be reinforced by plentiful supplies of the gum.

My first acquaintance with the insect was made one night in the fall of the year, at Canton, while dining with a merchant there. It was still warm enough to need the fan or punka swinging steadily over the table. We were about half through the soup when there came in through the windows such a swarm of the termites as soon filled every glass. They fell upon the table like hail, their wings, which they seemed to be losing, floating through the room and finding their way to our most unwilling mouths, in spite of every effort to avoid them. The windows were shut and the table cleared, and we went on with our meal, sweltering in order that we might eat.

These termites, which so bothered us, were the males or females out on their courtship tour, and well it is that they were so easily destroyed; for more than the very smallest percentage of the females were to live, the whole world would hardly be large enough to contain their progeny. One female will lay in the neighborhood of thirty-one millions of eggs in the course of a year. Of these eggs, the smallest proportion are males, the others being workers and soldiers, and the workers being in an excessive majority.

There are several species of the termite, some of which make those great tent-shaped mounds of which travelers tell so much, and others building high up in trees. The sort which is so destructive to wood and books makes its home underground, and approaches the object it intends to convert into food by tunneling to it. By this means it renders any attempt to watch for its coming null. Usually it follows the grain of the wood in its progress, but this is not always the case—the direction being determined by expediency. A chest which has not been totally destroyed will show that the insect has gone back and forth, and up and down, just as the nature of the wood or its thickness renders the most expedient. Frequently the termite will perform a most singular work in the effort to make the best use of any wooden structure into which it has made its way. If, for example, it has bored through the length of a pillar supporting a house, and finds, at the top that there is wood which it would like for food, it first uses up the wood of the pillar, and then fills the hollow shell thus created with mud packed until it is as hard as concrete. The pillars of one house taken down for rebuilding in St. Helena were found to be mere shells of wood, compactly filled, except for a tunnel through the length, with a pillar of hard mortar. The skill with which the termite conceals its ravages, and the manner in which it guards against the premature destruction of its means of approach to its food supplies, indicate a high degree of intelligence.

Sound Advice.

Never, under any circumstances, read a bad book; and never spend a serious hour in reading a second-rate book. No words can overstate the mischief of bad reading. A bad book will often haunt a man his whole life long. It is often remembered when much better is forgotten, it intrudes itself at the most solemn moments, and contaminates the best feelings and emotions. Reading trashy, second-rate books is a grievous waste of time also. In the first place, there are a great many more first-rate books than you can ever master; and in the second place, you cannot read an inferior book without giving up an opportunity of reading a first-rate book. Books, remember, are friends—books affect character; and you can as little neglect any other moral duty that is upon you.

Same Thing in Boston.

"I have no time to write a reply," said the haughty Boston maiden. "Tell Mr. Cahokia I am prevented from accepting his invitation for this evening by obstacles that are insuperable." "Miss Howjames says," reported the messenger boy to the young man some hours later, "that she can't go with ye this evening, and she says ye needn't git obstropolous, fur ye're in de soup."

An Appropriate Heading.

Reporter—"Here's a man with an account of the fight. Shall I put a slug head over it?" Managing Editor—"Does it amount to much?" Reporter—"Yes, one of them was killed. This man says they 'fit to the death'." Managing Editor—"Then head it 'The Survival of the Fittest.'"

Dr. B. W. Richardson on Alcohol.

In 1863, and for a year or two before, I had been making some original researches into the properties of a rare chemical substance named nitrite of amyl. Then I went on to inquire into the methyl series, and so step by step continued, reporting every year until, in 1886, I began with the alcohol. It was at one of these, but there are now known to be several. Now, the first great fact that startled me when examining into the alcohol was that they unquestionably lowered the temperature of the body. I did not then know that anyone else had noticed this before me; but I know now that two or three others—Dr. John Davy, (brother of Sir Humphrey), Dr. Rae, the Arctic explorer, and Dr. Lees, of Leeds, had all severally suspected this fact; but they had not proved it by experimental research. My great point was a demonstration by scientific instruments—by the perfect thermometers now made.

That was the first step—the startling fact that alcohol lowers temperature. Now for the second. This came from the study of anesthetics. In watching the action of alcohol, I found there were just the same four degrees or stages in the action of anesthetics, viz.: simple excitement without insensibility; excitement with commencing insensibility; insensibility absolute; and lastly, death-like insensibility. I came, therefore, to the conclusion that alcohol does not act after the manner of a food, but of a chemical substance like an anesthetic. This, then, was the second step. This was followed up by tracing the changes and the modifications which take place in the body from the continued use of alcohol. I reached thus the third step or third conclusion, viz., that alcohol is a prolific cause of death and of great harm to the internal organs of the body; it is, in fact, in its ordinary use, a slow poison.

I can no more accept the alcohol as foods than I can chloroform, or ether, or methanol. That they produce a temporary excitement is true; but as their general action is quickly to reduce animal heat, I cannot see how they can supply animal force. I see clearly how they reduce animal power, and can show a reason for using them in order to stop physical or to stupefy mental pain; but that they give strength—i. e., that they supply material for the construction of fine tissue, or throw force into tissues supplied by other material—must be an error as solemn as it is widespread. The true character of the alcohol is that they are agreeable temporary shrouds. The savage, with the manions of his soul unfurnished, braves his restless energy under their shadow. The civilized man, overburdened with mental labor or engrossing care, seeks the same shade; but it is shade, after all, in which, in exact proportion as he seeks it, the seeker retires from perfect natural life.

Mastodons in Alaska.

That the mastodon was once common in Alaska is certain from the great number of their skeletons, found in the marshes and clay banks of the Yukon and northern plains; but that this huge pachyderm still exists there in the living state has never been deemed likely, or even conjectured, till recently.

This conjecture rests on reports by way of the 'Stick Indians on the White River, a tributary of the Yukon.

The account is that while hunting on a wooded bottom, a few miles from this river, two Indians came upon a trail, consisting of enormous tracks fully two feet across, and deeply imprinted in the moss and earth, strewn along near which were broken branches of the trees.

Following cautiously on these signs, they at length heard the noise of the creature feeding, and presently espied a prodigious animal, as large, they assert, as a white man's house—meaning the trader's one-story store.

Its teeth, they declared, were as long as a man's leg, and curved outward, while its ears were likened to a seal-skin. In color it was represented to be dark brown. It leaned against a dead tree-stub, and scratched its side, and its body seemed to be covered with patches of coarse brown hair. Terrified at the sight of such enormous game, the two hunters promptly retreated.

Other native hunters corroborate this story with similar accounts of their experiences; accounts which they are reluctant to relate for fear of ridicule, or for some superstitious feelings regarding the matter.

The uncharitable attribute the apparition of the strange beast to the vision-disturbing effects of *hoochinoo*,—a particularly villainous kind of whiskey distilled from molasses. Others rejoin that these Indians never take *hoochinoo* while on a hunt,—or in other words, that they never go on a hunt as long as there is any *hoochinoo* left in the rancherie.

This may be subjecting the narrative of the natives to a somewhat harsh criticism, the more so when it is considered that one of the two who saw the supposed mastodon is an Indian of known probity and good character,—he with three others of his tribe having brought down to the trading post the body of the late murdered bishop.

Let us hope that these Indians have really seen a mastodon, and that it may, in due course, figure in the place of the lamented Jumbo, and not only substantiate the theories of the savants, but delight the eyes of every boy and girl in the civilized world.

Rather Vague.

The pacific utterances of Emperor William, while very creditable to him and satisfactory to his people, are rather too vague and conditional to be much relied upon. They are counterbalanced by huge national armaments everywhere, and the natural conclusion is that sooner or later these will be put to use, even if only in order to give them a reason for existence. These armaments are also continually increased, and in to-morrow's re-assembling of the Reichstag a new naval loan and other budget matters have the right of way. Possibly there may be some specific assurance of a less warlike feeling in Russia's recent declaration that she has determined to wash her hands of Bulgaria, being convinced that she could not have Germany's support in a positive policy there. This seems to accord with the statement that the Porte is willing to give its consent to the administrative union of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, provided no attempt is made to encroach on Macedonia. In that case young Prince Ferdinand, whose boasts have been so much ridiculed, would come out at the top after all. Indeed, he has now reigned so long by surferance that a foreign attempt to dislodge him might be justly called an attack on the peace of Europe.

The Thistle for Scotland.

There is much obscurity as to the circumstances under which the thistle was adopted as emblem by the Scottish nation but the following is a tradition: Queen Scotia had led her troops in a well fought field, and when the day was won retired to the rear to rest from her toils. She threw herself upon the ground, when, as ill luck would have it, an envious thistle had elected to grow at the very spot selected for her repose. Whether the fair Amazon fought in the national costume I know not, but the spines of the offending herb were sufficiently powerful to penetrate the skin in a very painful manner. A proverbial philosopher (not Mr. Tupper, I think) has declared that "he that sitteth on nettles riseth up quickly," and the same remark holds good of thistles. Queen Scotia sprang up and tore the thistle up by the roots. She was about to cast it from her with a military, but unladylike expression, when it struck her that the prickly plant would henceforth be ever associated in her mind with the glorious victory which she had just gained. Her intention was she had just gained. Her intention was she had just gained. Her intention was she had just gained. Her intention was she had just gained.

She Was Professional.

She—"Where did you say Dr. Winter met his wife?" He—"At the Springs—Saratoga Springs. A highly accomplished young lady." She—"She must have been. Was she also professional?" He—"Oh yes. Guess now, she was a—"

Her Bit of Advice.

"John," she said softly, "have you been saying anything about me to mother lately?" "No," replied John. "Why do you ask?" "Because she said this morning she believed you were on the eve of proposing to me. Now, I do not wish you to speak to mother when you have anything of that kind to say. Speak to me, and I'll manage the business with mother." And John said he would.

His Army Contract.

A Herculian Scots Grey, passing along Princes' Street, Edinburgh, one day, stopped at the Post Office and called on a boy to shine his boots. The feet of the dragoon were in proportion to his height, and, looking at the tremendous boots before him, the arab knelt down on the pavement and called on his chum near by—"Jamie, come over and give a hand; I've got an army contract."

Guessed She'd Try It.

Applicant for Place—"Well, I don't know, mum. You have a very large family and I'm afraid I couldn't do the work. I suppose you have great trouble keeping girls, don't you?" Sharp Housekeeper—"Yes, indeed. There is a big factory full of handsome young men near here, and every one of my servant girls goes off and gets married." "Oh! Well, I guess I'll try it."

Why They Did Not Respond.

President (debating club)—Well, we have had some stirring speeches on the negative side of the question of the evening. "Is Marriage a Failure?" but none of the gentlemen appointed to speak on the affirmative side have responded.

Secretary (whispering)—Their wives are here.

The President (loudly)—Owing to the lateness of the hour further debate is postponed. Adjourned.

Guffy's Generosity.

Uncle Guffy—"Which is de cheapest, de flybister or de poor-house paster?" Druggist—"Just the same—twenty-five cents apiece."

Uncle C.—"Well, doctor, you better give me all two; my old woman is berry low wid de remonias, an I want um fur hab eb'ry comfort."

A Private Still.

An Englishman had managed to pass the Civil Service examination, and obtained the important office of ganger in one of the western islands of Scotland. The locality was noted for smuggling, and as "new beams sweep clean," he was desirous of making a seizure. He met Tonal in the principal, or rather the only, hotel on the island. They had several "wets," and were becoming quite confidential. Said the Englishman, "Look here, old fellow! I understand there are a number of private stills about here. I would like to lay my hands on one. Now, if you can put me in the way, Tonal, I wouldn't mind giving you a five for yourself." "Och, ay!" said Tonal. "Maybe ye'll be needin' yer five tas yer nainel." Stann' a hauf nutokin, my laddie, an' I'll show ye what ye want." The drink was ordered, paid for, and drunk. "Noo," said Tonal, "here's my son"—pointing to a strapping fellow, who was at home on furlough, and was standing beside them—"he 'listed in the 93d six years ago, and he's a private still!"

A Parrot Story.

One time Deacon Staples' wife was putting up cucumber pickles in the kitchen, and the parrot—he was a very knowing bird, and had been piously brought up in the deacon's family—was sitting on the back of a chair watching the operation. Presently, when the deacon's wife's back was turned, the parrot slipped up and stole one of the pickles out of the dish. She turned around in time, however, to catch him at it, and threw her knife at him with such force it took all the feathers smoothly off the top of the bird's head. The parrot flew around for two days in sore distress at the loss of his top knot, but recovered it in the course of time. One day, some little time after this incident, a minister came to spend the Sabbath at Deacon Staples'. The parrot was in the dining-room when the family and the minister came in to breakfast. The clergyman was very bald; his head fairly shone. He had not more than got seated at the table before the parrot, fixing his gaze on the minister, screamed out "Ha! ye old scamp! been stealin' pickles!"

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Washington correspondent of The Buffalo Courier prophesies that President Harrison will try to force the Fisheries Treaty through the Senate. But though discomfited, the Democrats are numerous enough to be able to prevent the ratification of the treaty. Why they should be expected to do so is, however, a mystery. They are fully committed to the assertion that it is fair, just and honorable to the United States.

Senator McInnes writes to a British Columbia paper denying the report sent out from Ottawa that leprosy has been introduced into that province by the Chinese. He says he never either saw or heard of a case of leprosy in British Columbia. He adds, however, that the Indian population, now placed at 46,000, is likely to succumb before many years to whalkey, measles, scrofula, and other diseases contracted from whites and Chinese.

It has been calculated in the United States, and is not disputed, that the presidential election cost directly and indirectly not less than \$500,000,000, that is, at the rate of \$125,000,000 a year for the presidential period. Thus the mere cost of choosing their ruler is not only far greater than what the Grits sometimes call the large salary and expenses of our Governor-General, but is over several times the amount of our whole public expenditure.

A restrictionist contemporary derides Richard Cobden and his works in one column and lauds Mr. Foster in another. "What," it asks, "is left of Cobden? What lives after him?" To this it may be replied in the words of a poem written at the time of Cobden's death in 1865:

"If one poor cup of water shall have Due recognition in the Day of Dread, Angels may welcome this one, for he gave A nation bread!"

A very interesting commercial case has just been decided in New York. Last session the State Legislature passed a bill prohibiting storekeepers offering gifts to induce the public to make purchases. The Court of Appeals of the State has now decided that the law is unconstitutional on the ground that it interferes with the free sale of food, for the condition is imposed that no one shall sell food and at the same time and as part of the transaction give away any other thing.

It will be interesting to note what reception the bill for the suppression of combines, which Mr. N. C. Wallace, M.P., has announced he intends to re-introduce at the coming session of the Dominion Parliament, will get. A similar bill introduced into the New York State Legislature was defeated or rather it was made practically useless by amendments which were brought about by the influence of the trusts affected. Will the Canadian bill meet a similar fate?—Toronto "Mail."

There would be a sudden stoppage to the influx of pauper immigrants, so much complained of both by Canada and the United States, if the plan suggested by Signor Ugarcio of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, were adopted. It is simply that no emigrants should be given passports unless they can prove they have enough money to pay for their passage and to keep them decently for a few months after their arrival in America. Canadians will hope that not only the Italian Government but all the European Government may adopt the proposal.

The representative Jewish journals of America are discussing the expediency of holding the Sabbath on Sunday. The New York "Hebrew Standard," very forcibly says: "The business interests, the inexorable necessity, which compels hundreds to labour on the Jewish Sabbath in order to support their families, have made the observance of the Sabbath the exception instead of the rule. Those who cannot preach to; they do not come to listen to you. You cannot argue with them, because your words will not provide the bread which they and their families must have." The Rochester "Jewish Tidings" boldly says the change must come. No doubt one day of worship for both Jew and Gentile would be to the advantage of both Christians and Jews, and as there is no Jewish law forbidding worship on Sunday, there should be no great difficulty in transferring the Sabbath to Sunday.

A strong illustration of the viciousness of the game of beggar-my-neighbor that the European natives are playing, is afforded by the commotion upon Germany, increasing her naval estimates. She has appropriated over \$30,000,000 for the construction of new ironclads. With this addition to the German navy, Russia will feel herself insignificant. France must make a corresponding addition, and that will necessitate England's adding to her navy as much as that of France and Germany together. European taxpayers will look upon the dynamite gun vessel as a great blessing, should it abolish the floating castles of iron which now swallow up each year the value of a fair-sized city.

In connection with Lord Salisbury's advocacy of woman suffrage, it may be asked why women should not be considered intelligent enough to have votes when they are admitted to positions of trust both in England and the United States. The records of the Post-office Department of the latter country show that there are 3,000 women in the various States holding commissions as postmasters. The complaints against the women postmasters are comparatively few, and in the fourth-class offices their records are better than those of the men, because they are more conscientious and pay closer attention to their duties. There are thousands of women moreover both in England and America who are employed in responsible positions as bookkeepers, clerks, and telegraph operators. Some stronger objection to women voters than that they would not exercise the franchise intelligently will have to be advanced if the movement for the women's suffrage is to be resisted successfully.

The Cause of His Coughing.

"That was a severe coughing fit," remarked a sexton to an undertaker, when taking a glass together. "Oh, 'tis nothing save a little ale which went down the wrong way," replied the undertaker. "Ah! ah! that's just like you," said the sexton; "you always lay the coffin on the bier."

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