FOR THE BUSY MAN

Constant Reader Tells What He Missed in Last Week's Papers.

"Seems to me I've read nothing but earthquake," said the Busy Man. "What a disaster that was! One hundred and fifteen thousand lives lost, perhaps more; Messina and Reggio in ruins and a score of other towns in Calabria or Sicily devastated! I suppose there was other news of importance, but I didn't get to it."

"Governor Hughes began his second term as Governor of New York State," replied Constant Reader, "taking the oath of office at the Assembly Chamber in Albany, as did also Samuel S. Koenig, the new Secretary of State.

"In his inaugural address the Governor made an emphatic plea for the improvement of 'nominating and election machinery' to render 'less easy the domination of selfish interests or the protection of those who find profit in lawbreaking.' This was coupled with an exposition of his views on the rights of an Executive to carry his troubles direct to the people. And the applause when he urged the putting down of 'selfish interests' in the political field and declared the Executive's right "to justify his position to the people to whom he is accountable' was only less vehement than when he received his pledge of devotion to the people, made two years ago. 'I enter upon my second term of office with a keener sense of its responsibilities and my own limitations,' said the Governor, 'but I have an intense desire to render loyal service to the people.'

CIVIL SERVICE CHANGES.

"Governor Hughes approved, with certain modifications, the changes made by the State Civil Service Commission in revising the classification of places in the state and county. The number of places in the competitive class is increased by 309 and two are added to the exempt class.

"President-elect Taft has taken a strong stand against the Maryland Democratic machine's constitutional amendment to disfranchise thousands of citizens. He declares that the amendment, which is to be submitted to the voters next fall, should be condemned, as 'it is not drawn in the spirit of justice and equality, having regard for the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments.' Charles P. Taft, of Cincinnati, brother of President-elect Taft, withdrew from the race for the United States Senate from Ohio, and Theodore E. Burton, of Cleveland, will be named by acclamation to succeed Senator Foraker.

"President Roosevelt shook hands with over six thousand persons at his last New Year's reception in the White House.

"Three treaties with Great Britain—dealing with the Newfoundland fisheries, the rights of citizens in the boundary waters between the United States and Canada and certain pecuniary claims—all of which have long been in process of negotiation, have been completed, and Secretary Root expects to sign all three before resigning.

WANT TO SELL CITY.

"It was revealed that Senator McCarren, of Brooklyn, and Daniel F. Cohalan, chairman of the Tammany law committee, had been retained by ferry interests which want to sell the discontinued East River ferries to the city. In the face of the refusal of Edward S. Murphy, superintendent of buildings, to approve of the plans of the Bridge Department for the foundation of the municipal and subway terminal building at the Brooklyn Bridge, on the ground that too great a weight was to be imposed on a bed of fine sand, Bridge Commissioner Stevenson awarded the contract.

"The report of the Controller of New York State, Martin H. Glynn, showed that the state has a surplus of $13,000,000 and a cash balance of $31,785,076 23, the largest in its history.

"The Washington Life Insurance Company, which had offices at No. 141 Broadway, discontinued business and announced that all its policy obligations had been reinsured in the Pittsburg Life and Trust Company, of Pittsburg. The books of the company were removed from the offices, and when Otto Kelsey, State Superintendent of Insurance, heard of it, he ordered an investigation.

"William Wright established another aeroplane record at Le Mans, France, remaining in the air for 2 hours and 9 minutes.

"Professor J. P. Gordy, of New York University, and his wife, overcome by grief at the death of their only daughter, committed suicide. Major Isaac Walker Maclay, U. S. A. (retired), who helped to carry President Lincoln out of Ford's Theatre after his assassination, died at his home, No. 804 Palisade avenue, Yonkers.

INSECTS' BUZZ-WORDS

Wing Vibrations and Breathing Organs Serve as Tongues.

Insects are not popularly considered to be talkative, although the mosquito is something of a concert singer and the common fly often provokes profane speech on the part of human victims. It is true the insect tribe lacks vocal organs, yet it possesses a language and a means of communication entirely sufficient for primitive needs. Some day science, when it has completed an unabridged monkey dictionary, may be able to study more thoroughly the dialects of the tiny buzzers and creepers, and put humanity in closer touch with the pestiferous—that is to say, interesting forms of lower life. Of course, it is a little too much to hope that we will ever be able to argue with a Jersey 'skeeter, or get a favorable answer to the question, addressed to a mattress in a strange boarding house, whether we can expect to sleep in peace. The interests of men and bloodsuckers are not identical, despite some contrary allegations, so that the best Esperanto devised for the exchange of human and insectiferous ideas could not achieve any real harmony between the two.

How far insects have actually progressed in the parts of speech is told by Dr. Henry C. McCook, in "Harper's Magazine." A great deal of emotion is expressed by their bodily gestures. The motion of a finger attracts the attention of an ant that is sentinelling a column on the march. It halts, thrusts out its antennæ and shows signs of excitement. When the finger comes nearer the antennæ wave rapidly. The ant's head and body jerk with tense eagerness. It stretches forth its head and reaches out its fore legs, with jaws agape and antennæ quivering. The ant may even rise up on its hind legs in a pugilistic attitude of self-defence, the same attitude taken by a bear, a horse and a man ready to fight. The tarantula and other spiders do the same thing when attacked or threatened with danger.

Wing talk, otherwise pteratic language, depends on the varying vibrations of insects' wings. Any one may distinguish the contented droning among the blossoms, the quivering notes of alarm and the sharp businesslike buzzing of the homeward flight. Many emotions may be conveyed by the pitch. The common fly usually strikes the note F while hovering above a baldhead at a summer resort hotel. The wing note of bees and other insects humming above a bed of flowers is A, as tested by flute and ear. Tuning forks are excellent for measuring the compass of the tone poets of our fields and verandas. On the scientific basis of 256 vibrations a second for the note C, the house fly at F vibrates his wings 352 times a second and the honey bee at A keeps her propellers working at a rate of 440 times a second. When a bee is loaded after visiting the nectar saloon and pollen store, her tone falls to E, and perhaps the other insects understand the melody as equivalent to "We Won't Go Home Till Morning." The threat of the angry hornet is familiar to every country boy.

Some profound emotions are conveyed by the spiracles or breathing organs, arranged in pairs along the abdomen and thorax of insects. A membrane behind each spiracle may be vibrated so rapidly as to produce a sound. This is the source of the alleged pathetic cry emitted by a fly when it is caught on sticky paper and can't buzz with its wings. The fly wails and shrieks like a high-priced actress, 'tis said. It is a comfort to know that the mosquito has this spiracular voice, as well as a buzz. The bee is likewise gifted, and her exercise of the organ is called "piping." When the old queen of a colony has left with a swarm the new queen often sounds her pipes like a true Highlander, and the enchanted workers bow down their heads and remain motionless while listening. It is not known whether they offer the queen extravagant compliments afterward, but, anyhow, the future queens, still within the royal cells, hear the sounds through the waxen walls that confine them and respond with a seemingly jealous, angry antiphony. The young queens pipe a little on their own account when they have nothing else to do. It is suggested that the large sphinx moth, popularly known as the death's head, is able to enter and ravage hives by imitating the piping of the queens. The working class of bees is deceived and hypnotized by the intruder, whom it could easily sting to death.

Stridulation is the common language of grasshoppers, locusts and katydids. It is the same as playing a violin, only the bow is a series of fine cogs on the insect's thigh, and the instrument is his stiff, parchment-like wing cover. The chirruping noise is important in love making among the insects. It serves for serenades, assignations, popping the question and all other details. The music of crickets and grasshoppers has been appreciated for a thousand years by the Japanese, who confine them in cages and keep them in the house as Westerners do canaries. Ants have stridulating organs of so high a range that human ears are incapable of hearing the sound they produce. The antennæ are eloquent with meaning for all insects.

THE GERMAN WAR LORD.

Severe Criticisms of His Methods and His Army Officers.

Octave Mirbeau, in The American Magazine.

Some people fancy that the Emperor of Germany plans wars, but, in spite of his uniforms and his fanfares, this is not so. He is not a warrior, but a military man, which is very different. He is not even brave. William II's wild discourses and menaces are only commercial tricks, intended to frighten Europe, and by so doing strengthen our great manufacturers who live by armament. The industry is colossal; unclouded peace would destroy it.

Another thing which keeps him from making war is the fear he has of the result. Every one admits that our army is the strongest in the world. It is drilled and kept up to the mark; our arsenals are full, our armament complete, our fortresses perfect. But, sad to say, we have no more real officers. The German army is to-day commanded by mere parade officers, who are very similar to the pretty coxcombs of France's Second Empire. They do not work, and only occupy themselves with their pleasures, which are none of the best, as there is great corruption among them.

In case of war William would have no one to command his armies. Doubtless he would try to do it himself, for he has war plans of his own, just as he has plans of statues, pictures, operas and everything else, all his own—his own. With William in command, we should be beaten by Switzerland, or less than Switzerland.

At the manœuvres, where everything is carefully arranged in advance to make a perfect mise-en-scène with the Emperor a majestic figure in the centre, well, the generals have the greatest difficulty to keep from running William down. They sweat blood to keep from surrounding him, even on absolutely flat ground. I have assisted at some of the manœuvres, and I can assure you it is nothing but buffoonery.

THE "BISHOP'S" WINNING RUSE.

That was a good old comedy bishop who one fine day entered a large jeweller's establishment in Regent street, London, to make an extensive purchase of valuable presents. He selected them with great care as regards their artistic value, but quite regardless of cost. The proprietor and his assistants buzzed round his lordship. The selected valuables were packed in separate parcels at his suggestion, neatly tied and sealed, and he had just taken a seat in the private office of the proprietor and was feeling in his pocket for his check book, when two men, who had been peering in at the glass door leading to the street walked up the shop and stood behind the bishop. They were plainly dressed, sharp-looking men, and thus bluntly addressed the jeweller:

"What has this man been ordering?"

The bishop looked up, saw the men, turned pale, clutched the sides of the chair, dropped his glasses and looked as if he would bolt. Before he could stir, however, the handcuffs were on his wrists.

"Bishop, indeed!" said one of the men. "He was a colonel yesterday. Here, 'bishop,' come along to Vine street. 'Bishop,' indeed! Ha! ha! Well, that's a good 'un!" And turning to the astonished jeweller, he continued: "Just copped him in time, sir; lucky for you. Oh, by the way, you might get one of your assistants to bring round these parcels he has selected. We must enter them at the police station; we have a cab at the door. We have been tracking the bishop all the morning."

Without a word the "bishop" followed the detectives into the cab, and all three got in as the assistant came out with the valuables.

"Here," said one of the detectives through the window, "place those in here—they will be safer—and you get on the top with the driver."

It was not far to Vine street, but, as usual, the traffic was congested in Oxford Circus and the cab had to halt occasionally. It was, however, soon at the police station. The assistant jumped off the driver's seat and opened the door.

The cab was empty!—Strand Magazine.

AROUND THE WORLD FOR $1,000.

Some months ago Major George P. Ahern, U. S. A., stationed in the Philippines, resolved to combine a trip around the world with a leave of absence and chose the route across Siberia. On his recent return to Manila he made public, as of interest to travellers, details of time and expense. His itinerary, somewhat condensed, was as follows:

	Miles.	Hours.	Fares.
Manila to Vladivostok, via Kobe	2,718	264	$82 04
Vladivostok to Moscow	5,261	262	155 35
Moscow to London, via Vienna	2,500	85	76 70
London to New York	3,200	154	100 00
New York to San Francisco, via New Orleans	3,700	133	90 50
San Francisco to Manila (transport)	6,000	720	80 00
Totals	23,979	1,623	$584 59

Major Ahern's actual time, it will be observed, was sixty-seven days fifteen hours. He was not trying to "break a record." Nor did he choose in all cases the shortest route. He diverged from Berlin to Vienna, and the shortest line from New York to San Francisco is not via New Orleans, even though it be necessary to touch at Washington.

He wished to see what he could of certain countries in the time at his disposal. He used the ordinary conveyances, except the army transport from San Francisco to Manila, by which he probably saved no time, though he spared himself some expense.

It will be observed that Major Ahern's expenses for transportation were only $584 59. This includes meals and lodgings for the sea journeys, but not for those on land. He also had the advantages of getting across the Pacific on a public vessel. The ordinary steamer fare for that trip is $225.

Yet, with these additions, it is evident that it is now possible for the ordinary traveller to girdle the globe at an expense not exceeding $1,000, and in less than seventy days. Probably, with careful planning of steamer connections, the trip could be done in sixty days, or even less.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

ARMY MACHINE GUN PLATOONS

PLAN TO ADD THEM TO FOOT REGIMENTS.

Their Value and Mobility Demonstrated by Service in the Philippines and Cuba.

[From The Tribune Bureau.]

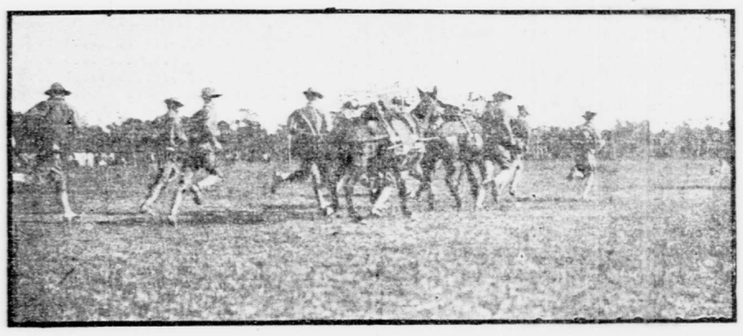
Washington, Jan. 2.—The machine gun is coming to play an important part in the armament of the military force. The importance of that type of ordnance is in the measure of its value in military operations and its admirable adaptation to mobility. One of the plans proposed is to establish separate and independent commands, especially armed with machine guns, such as the platoon which is connected with the 15th Infantry. That organization has to its credit some excellent service rendered in the Philippine Islands, where the platoon was organized in 1906 while the regiment was stationed at Fort McKinley and used in active operations against the Pulajanes in Leyte.

The mobility of the command was illustrated by the fact that the platoon left its station the same day the order was received, and its equipment, in addition to that ordinarily carried by the infantry soldier on active field service, consisted of two automatic machine guns with carriage and tripod mounts and twenty thousand rounds of ball cartridges. The command remained in the field practically a year, operating independently of any other command, thereby fully demonstrating its efficiency as an organization. The platoon has returned to this country and is now stationed at Fort Crook, Neb. It has been fitted out with the Vickers-Maxim automatic machine gun in place of the old Colt machine guns.

The machine gun platoons attached to the infantry and cavalry regiments stationed in Cuba have been doing splendid work also. This is the subject of a special report made by General T. S. Barry, in command of the Army of Cuban Pacification. Each of the seven machine gun platoons with the troops in Cuba has conducted target practice, largely upon the ideas of the individual commanding officers, there being no prescribed system. Instruction was given in range finding from 200 to 2,000 yards, and there was as much firing as possible with the limited amount of ammunition available. The results obtained, as might be expected, were as varied as the conditions under which such instruction was given, and emphasize the importance of having a system of instruction uniform for all platoons, as is contemplated by the Provisional Firing Regulations for Machine Gun Platoons, just issued, and which will be carried into effect as soon as arrangements now under way shall have been completed.

Major General J. Franklin Bell, chief of staff of the army, in his annual report just submitted, says:

"The provisional machine gun platoons for cavalry and infantry as now organized are not satisfactory. They were established in 1906, by order, for experimental purposes, and the best authorities are not yet fully in accord as to the best organization for machine guns. A board was convened in February, at the Presidio of Monterey, to conduct experiments and recommend a suitable organization for a machine gun company for infantry regiments, Company A, 20th Infantry, being designated for this purpose, and special officers temporarily assigned to it. The board decided upon what it considered a suitable organization for the infantry machine gun company, and a tentative system of target practice and drill is nearly ready for issue. Machine guns can have a satisfactory organization only by legislative authority, but there is a general unanimity of opinion throughout the service that this organization should be an additional troop or company in each regiment of cavalry and infantry, with the necessary complement of officers and men."



UNITED STATES INFANTRY MACHINE GUN PLATOON RUSHING INTO ACTION AT "DOUBLE TIME."

AS VAIN AS A PEACOCK.

I venture to send you some curious particulars about the behavior of a young peacock that is kept here. I should be glad to learn whether our experience can be confirmed or illustrated by any of your readers. The bird began by sedulously frequenting the stable yard, and whenever the carrriage was brought out of the coachhouse he would take his stand by it, and gaze at his reflection in the panels. He then took to accompanying the carriage up to the house, and, standing beside it at the front door, engaged in self-contemplation. He now runs behind the carriage when it starts from the house, down to a certain point of the drive, apparently in the hope that it may stop and allow him to continue his favorite occupation, but he seems to conclude at a certain place that the case is hopeless, though if the carriage halts further down the drive he will rejoin it and resume his observations. It occurred to us to wonder what he would do if a looking glass were placed on the lawn. This was accordingly done, and he at once found it out. Nothing will induce him to quit it. He will stand by it for hours together. At first he occasionally looked inquisitively behind the glass at intervals, to see if a bird was actually present, but he has given this up now. He stands in front of it, entirely absorbed, often motionless for a long time, occasionally moving his head gently up and down, and sometimes softly touching the glass with his bill, appearing slightly bewildered by the contact. If food is thrown to him he takes no notice, unless it is close to the glass, when he will hurriedly gobble it up and return to his more congenial employment in haste, as though vexed at being interrupted. If the glass is taken into the drawing room, which is on the ground floor, looking into the garden, he will enter the room by door or window, find the glass and continue his favorite pursuit, and he spends the greater part of the day at the door that leads from the drawing room into the garden, in the hope that some one may bring out his glass for him. Meanwhile the peahen is sitting on a nest of eggs in a hedge close at hand. He never goes near her, his only idea being to find opportunities for contemplating his own perfections. I suppose that the proverb "As vain as a peacock" refers to the bird's habit of spreading his tail and strutting about, but it is curious to find that this instinctive vanity lies deeper still, and is not confined to the desire to arouse the admiration of his mate, as is generally taken for granted, but is based upon a genuine complacency and an almost morbid consciousness of his personal attractions.—Arthur C. Benson, in The London Spectator.

CENTRE OF POPULATION.

The centre of population in 1900 was in the state of Indiana. In 1790 the centre was 23 miles east of Baltimore, in the state of Maryland, or virtually on the Atlantic shore line.

Its migration has been slow and remarkably uniform, both in rate and in direction. It has hovered for 110 years along the thirty-ninth parallel of latitude and its total variation in latitude has been less than one-third of one degree.

The westward movement has averaged less than a degree in a decade, notwithstanding the incredibly swift occupation of a vacant continent by a movement of population westward. The easterly position of the centre of population is in part due to the fact that the eastern part of the continent was most settled and was settled from the east. The easterly position of the centre of population is also due to the more evenly distributed and more abundant resources of the eastern half of the United States.

It should not be forgotten that the geographical centre of the United States lies some hundreds of miles west of the Mississippi River. The eastern half of the country, therefore, embraces the Atlantic lowlands, the prairies and Great Lake plains, the Gulf lowlands and the forests and minerals of the Appalachian Mountains and Appalachian plateaus. Over against these are the arid and mountainous areas of the west.

Certain areas will be reclaimed to incredible productiveness, and the mineral wealth is vast; but the centre of population may be expected to remain permanently to the eastward of the geographical centre of the land.—Geographical Journal.

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