TIMELY TOPICS

Difference in taste of jokes is a great strain on astonishment.

It is all right for a federation of musicians to condemn "ragtime," but will they beat it?

A doctor recommends "the song and dance" cure. Too many patients get to thinking about themselves. Have fun!

President Schwab, of the steel trust, advises boys to rely on merit, not influence. However, many a boy with merit has failed to rise in the world for want of a pull.

There is a disposition in some European countries to form a commercial alliance against America. The fact in itself would indicate they felt they were already up against it.

Girls may deliver addresses at college commencements, but as bearing on a subject of interest to them as well as the boys there's no maiden speech that beats the shyly spoken "Yes."

An Eastern man is going into the courts to try to recover $36,000 he lost in gambling. While the courts are dealing with his case wouldn't it be well for them to furnish him with a guardian?

A San Francisco man traces his descent back to Adam. What of it? We are all descended from Adam if a high and generally accepted authority is true. We all have ancestors, if it comes to that.

"Twenty-six deer at one shot" sounds a little like the beginning of one of those yarns which are told in the country grocery store. Nevertheless, this is given as a fact, nor did the Vermont man who made the remarkable record violate any game law. The "shot" was a "snap shot," and he fired it from a camera instead of from a gun.

If certain people could have their way no man would be allowed to part his hair in the middle or go out in the rain without overshoes, or appear on the street in cold weather without ear muffs. Whenever some undesirable thing in society is brought to the attention of the people, emotional persons at once cry out, "Let's have a law about it."

The vastness of our material resources, the immensity of our mineral wealth, the superior skill of our citizens and all those advantages on which we depend for world-conquering progress in the victories of peace are not going to be neutralized or minimized by conflicts between labor and capital. Without compulsion, by their own volition, for their mutual interests, wage-workers and employers will quietly settle their occasional disputes. Strikes will steadily decline to the vanishing point.

A distressed but industrious reviewer who tries to keep up with the procession announces that, by actual count, no less than eighty-eight historical romances appeared in the month of April. If this sort of thing keeps up steps will have to be taken to save the lives of reviewers. Novel readers who undertake to read all the new books may become mental and physical wrecks, but since they voluntarily tempt fate they deserve no sympathy. The unfortunate wretches who have to read the endless supply of historical fiction, whether or no, are the ones who need relief.

Noiseless baseball, as distinguished from the game played largely with the lungs, may not be so far distant as it seems to many despondent lovers of a sportsmanlike game. A graduate publication, representing a well-known college, declares that the adoption of a noiseless game would do more good to that institution than winning the championship. The campaign motto of a baseball nine ought to be, "Give an opponent every opportunity to do his best—and then beat him!" A rowdy may resort to barbaric yells as a means of defeating an antagonist, but a gentleman is bound to refrain from debasing methods of gaining a triumph.

An interesting temperance measure was presented in the New York Legislature, recently adjourned, but failed of passage. Its purpose was to oblige all saloonkeepers to sell tea, coffee, milk and chocolate as well as intoxicants. The theory of those who drafted it was that many men who seek the saloons for warmth and light and sociability, and drink from a sense of obligation, would be content with temperance beverages, and perhaps prefer them, if they were to be had. The opponents of the bill argued that the saloonkeepers might easily defeat its purpose if they wished by serving tea and coffee of so poor a quality that no one would drink it; but a plan similar to that provided for in the bill has been tried in certain saloons in England, and with considerable success.

It is an encouraging sign for the health of the modern American that the popularity of outdoor life in this country seems to be increasing. The number and variety of sports and pastimes which allure to open-air exertion has grown greatly. Not very many years have elapsed since the time when tennis and football were unusual and golf and the bicycle were almost unknown. Yet the influence of these and other sports has been so strong in recent years that open-air life has come to be enjoyed for its own sake and apart from the amusements associated with it. It is a great mistake to suppose that the pleasures of outdoor life are especial privileges of youth or of any given type of summer amusement-seeker. The immense advantages they confer should be shared by all alike. In the present state of our social development they are among the richest of the blessings within the reach of the people.

How much suffering is caused by fear in this world—and how much useless suffering. All the terrors of superstition are utterly useless—yet they have inflicted suffering beyond calculation. The dreadful fear of ghosts that never existed has probably caused more actual suffering—especially among children—than any dozen illnesses. The great mission of civilization and of religion is to do away with the reign of fear in the heart and the imagination. It is comforting to know that each century sees some step taken toward freeing men from fear and its accompanying torture. We believe that the keenest suffering through fear comes from dread of being "found out." What man or child has not during life suffered keenly the dread of exposure? Who has not in dreams suffered from fear so keenly as to make the dream seem real for hours after waking and leave a genuine sensation of agony in the mind? The mother suffers the agony of fear when her child is ill. Medical science is constantly and successfully struggling to eliminate that source of suffering through fear. The working man with wife and children depending on him lives in constant dread of the notice in his pay envelope: "Hereafter your services will not be required." This fear causes him intense and useless suffering, which weakens his mind and prevents his best effort. That form of fear is gradually fading out, thanks to improved industrial conditions, and especially to the growing power of trades unionism, which compels the employer to share the risk and the worry. The animals, living in a constant struggle for life, know fear, but only when danger is actually present. There is no reason to think that they suffer the agony of anticipation, which so often tortures men. They are mercifully spared. There is much encouragement for all in the gradual extinction of fear as a factor in our daily lives. Every one who helps along this extinction helps to free mankind from slavery most painful. Every person can do something toward minimizing the suffering caused by fear. Free children from their dread of darkness and of ghosts—never inflict fear upon them by forcing them to do that which frightens them. Cheer up the despondent man or woman whose fear for the future makes the present dark. Banish fear from your own life, and decide with the old Greek that by living justly you will put yourself beyond the power of any man, and, therefore, beyond the reach of fear.

Youngest and Oldest of Kings.

Europe has a new little King who has a double claim to distinction. He is the youngest of ruling kings, and at the same time the lineal representative of the oldest reigning family in Europe. His name and title is Grand Duke Franz IV. of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and he ascended to the throne on which his fathers have sat for twenty-five generations less than a month ago. The young king is 19 years old, and it is his cousin who is prince consort of Holland. His kingdom is one of the petty German States, and comprises only 5,000 square miles of territory, with a total population of 60,000. The total revenue of the kingdom is barely $10,000,000 a year, but it has a "man-sized" national debt of nearly $30,000,000. Franz IV. was the second king of the new century to ascend the throne, the first being Edward of England. He is a near relative of the Czar of Russia, and has connections with almost every royal family of Europe.

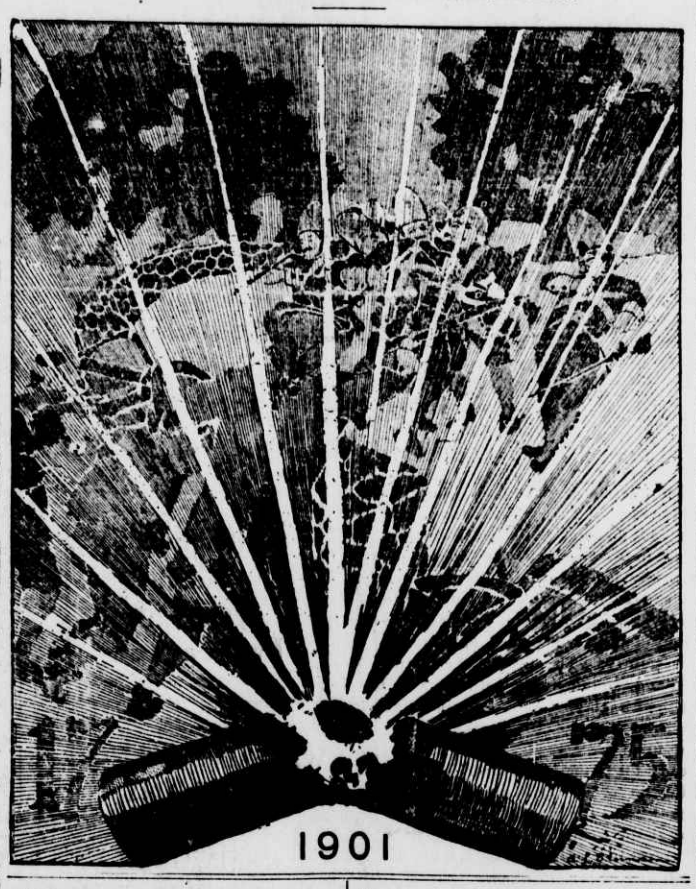
FRANZ IV.

A Happy Suggestion.

Author—I am troubled with insomnia. I lie awake at night hour after hour, thinking about my literary work.

Friend—How very silly! Why don't you get up and read some of it?—Glasgow Times.

X-RAYS APPLIED TO THE FIRECRACKER.



A POWDERLESS FOURTH

The boys had planned such a particularly jolly Fourth that when Mrs. Reynolds became so ill on the very morning of the 3d and the doctor sternly announced if a firecracker exploded within a mile of the house the boy who shot it off would be guilty of murder there was wrathful indignation in the breasts of the junior patriots.

"Say, fellows, what do you think of it anyway?" demanded Ned Thursby in a tone of fierce display.

"Think of it!" exclaimed Sam Prentice, shaking his fist at the cloud of dust which enveloped the doctor's antiquated gig. "I think it's a mean shame."

"What are we going to do with our firecrackers, I'd like to know," Will Brown asked angrily, "and the skyrockets and Roman candles and the cannon?"

"Plague take it, anyway," scowled Jack Loring, hitting the tree against which he was leaning a blow with his clinched hand. "We might just as well have stayed in the city."

"I tell you what, fellows," interrupted Ned. "I wouldn't mind so much spoiling the Fourth if it was only Mrs. Sawyer, or any of our mothers, or Miss Hattie or Miss Isabel, but every kid knows what Mrs. Reynolds is. I don't believe she's sick at all."

"Nor I," added Jack impressively. "She's just done it to keep us from having a good time. Don't you remember last summer how she spoilt the yacht race by tumbling into the river and splashing the sails?"

"I wish your Uncle George was here now. He'd tell us what to do, for I don't think that other George, the father of his country, cares the least bit that his little boys can't have rockets and firecrackers," and Will lay down upon the grass and pounded the soft turf with his vigorous heels.

"Of course he doesn't," agreed Sam mournfully, "or he wouldn't have let it happen. I think he's a mighty mean father, that's what I think."

"Oh, perhaps it's because he's been a man for such years and years that he's forgotten all about chopping the cherry tree and being a little boy himself," explained Ned magnanimously.

"I say, fellows," Jack began excitedly. "I bet you George Washington will help us yet. Isn't he the father of his country and wouldn't my father or Ned's father or any of our fathers hate to have us lose a good time? I tell you, George Washington cares as much about it as they do, and I'm going to write to him and tell him that we can't shoot off any firecrackers or cannons or rockets or torpedoes or do anything at all to give him a rousing send-off, just because an old woman says she's dying."

"I don't believe George Washington cares anything about us," Sam interposed gruffly.

"I don't believe he does, either," supplemented Will.

"Well," said Jack, "I intend to write him a regular letter and tell him just how it is. I thought I'd say that we came all the way from Chicago to shoot off a cannon for him on the Fourth of July, and didn't he feel sorry we couldn't do it, because Mrs. Reynolds went and got sick at the last moment and the doctor said we'd be hanged if we did. And then I'd say 'Good-by, from your sorrowful little boys, Jack and Ned and Sam and Will.'"

"Even if we did write to him, how could we send it, I'd like to know?" asked Sam.

The question was a bombshell. It staggered Jack.

"I don't know," he answered blankly. "I never thought about it, but, say! I have it. We'll tack the letter on the cherry tree in the back yard, and when he comes around at night to cut it down with his little hatchet he'll find it and read it and——"

"How do you know he'll come around to cut it down?" interrupted Will.

"How do I know it? Because every Fourth of July he's a little boy again, you ninny, and, of course, he'll want to use his little hatchet. Hurrah for George Washington!" and the enthusiastic spokesman tumbled off the fence in his efforts to wake the country echoes.

Four pairs of sturdy legs dashed along the road with lightning speed and nothing remained of the morning's conclave but a battered rail and a cloud of dust. The blotted paper tacked so conspicuously to the bark of the cherry tree was pathetically comic to the belated traveler who discovered it while enjoying the solitude of the garden.

"Poor little chaps," he laughed, "their mothers needn't have feared for their eyes and their fingers, after all. Confound Mrs. Reynolds, it's just as they say. 'She's never sick on Sunday, when little boys don't mind not shooting off cannons.'

"I guess George will have to come to the rescue after all if he isn't 'the father—of his country.' But what the dickens can we do that won't make a noise? I guess I'd better consult Miss Hattie," and the belated traveler left the blotted paper on the table, where he had carried it to examine its contents by aid of the solitary lamp burning in the farm house.

The small head peeping out of the farm house window at an early hour the following morning raised a shout that awakened instantly the three remaining occupants of the tiny dormitory.

"Hurrah for George Washington! What did I tell you fellows? There's the answer, by jingo!" and Jack pounded the floor rapturously with his bare feet.

There was a rush from three small beds and a scamper to the window. A square white patch conspicuously sealed with scarlet wax adorned the cherry tree in place of the larger sheet the boys had left fluttering in the moonlight.

"Let's hurry up, kids, and see who'll get dressed the first," and Ned's order was instantly obeyed. Ten minutes later four heads bent eagerly over the old-fashioned writing.

"My Dear Boys: I was just going to chop away at your cherry tree and, in fact, had given it a single whack, which hadn't amounted to much, as the blade is rather rusty, when I discovered your letter tacked to the bark, and I said to myself: 'George, you must not touch this cherry tree with your little hatchet, for, behold, it has turned over a new leaf.' So I laid aside my rusty steel and untacked the tack which bound it to the bark and, behold, your misery lay unfolded.

"I've had my own siege with women, boys, for the 'father of his country' embraces all classes, but I've learned my lesson that the widow must ever go her own way. So we'll allow the doctor to manage Mrs. Reynolds and you and I will have our Fourth of July in the woods along the edge of the river.

"Leave the cannon behind and the firecrackers and rockets, for we'll celebrate in spite of them, as you'll see how if you arrive at the minute of 11 by the sun.

"To Ned, Sam, Will and Jack,
"From the Father of His Country,
"G. Washington."

"Do you think he really means it?" asked Jack, breathlessly.

"Course he does," replied Ned, indignantly, gasping with nervous astonishment. "Didn't you know the father of his country couldn't tell a lie?"

Four frightened lads sitting on a fallen tree at the edge of the river jumped hurriedly to their feet and bowed nervously to the stately personage descending the bank dressed in the buff and blue uniform, with his white hair tied in a queue.

"Good morning, boys," said a strangely familiar voice, "you're true to the minute, I see. I'm afraid I'm a little late myself, however. I was delayed a trifle, hoping to induce Martha to come with me," and the father of his country peered through the trees as if to see if she had changed her mind.

"Martha is my wife, you know," the figure continued smilingly. "Martha Washington, the mother of her country. She knows you all very well."

The four lads looked at each other in amazement. Ned cleared his throat very hard and gazed at his boots, but at a nudge from Jack whispered weakly:

"Does she know our names, father of your country?"

"Oh, yes, and so do I. You're Ned and the tall boy is Jack, and Sam is the smallest, though he's not very small, and Will is the other one who was going to shoot off the cannon in my honor. Too bad about that, wasn't it? But come up under the trees where it is shady until we get acquainted with each other."

Washington threw himself down on the grass and leaned his white head against a huge trunk.

"Let me see," consulting his watch, "it is just five minutes of 12, so we'd better start the balloon."

"Oh, are we really going to have a balloon?" asked Ned excitedly.

"Well, you see," answered Washington, "I thought that cannon had to be replaced somehow, and as we couldn't make any noise I wanted something in my honor and so I decided on a balloon. They both end in smoke anyway. There it is," he added, dragging the huge paper structure from behind a tree. "Isn't it a beauty? Now each boy take one side of it while I get it lighted."

There was no more formality in the little company. The lads laughed aloud in glee and when the fuse caught fire and the tissue globe slowly sailed away over the river each small voice added its share to the refrain started by the general, "Three cheers for the red, white and blue."

"There!" exclaimed Father George with satisfaction. "Now I feel duly honored and at the same time hunger for more. Somewhere in these woods, boys, Martha has spread a lunch for us, and a hatchet to the first fellow who finds it." There was a general scamper through the trees, quickly followed by a triumphant shout from Ned and Sam, who had approached the dainty feast from opposite sides. A snowy tablecloth was spread upon the ground and held in place by glistening pebbles, while on it was laid every picnic delicacy that could delight the heart of the small boy.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ned; "we've found it."

"True for you," answered the general, appearing through the opening. "But Martha herself has left us, I see. The dear girl is rather nervous on the Fourth. Eat what you like, fellows. Every man is his own master."

They needed no more urgent invitation and soon made sad havoc in the pretty table arrangements. George Washington was no longer a formidable myth, but a flesh and blood personage, as real as they. When luncheon was finally demolished they lay down under the trees and listened to thrilling tales of mad wolves and encounters with the Indians and the sufferings of the ragged continentals in winter quarters at Valley Forge.

Toward the close of the afternoon George caught a horse that was wandering at will through the woods and, jumping on his back, dashed impetuously down the rustic steps leading to an abandoned cave, to exhibit practically the escape of Mad Anthony Wayne.

"That's how he did it, boys," exclaimed the general, slowly mounting again. "He just brandished his sword aloft and none of the British dared follow. I must leave you now," he added, "for I promised Martha to return at 6. Have you had a good Fourth?"

"The best I've ever spent," shouted Ned emphatically.

"Me, too," chimed in Will, Sam and Jack.

"What, without fireworks?" queried the general, incredulously.

"I've learned more patriotism," answered Ned, "than I've ever learned with a whole box of firecrackers."

"Good!" exclaimed the general, "that's the right sort of a Fourth of July. Wait a minute and I'll row you to the edge of the farm. I have a boat down the stream and we'll call our trip 'Washington crossing the Delaware.'"

He hurried away and soon returned with a light skiff, which he propelled cleverly toward the bank.

"Jump in, boys, and away we go. Now sing for all you're worth. Mrs. Reynolds can't mind music.

And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

"Good-by, boys," he added, giving his hand to each in turn at the farm landing. "Watch for me next Fourth of July around the cherry tree." And the brave general rowed away in the sunlight to the echoes of

"Three cheers for George Washington, the father of his country—first in peace, first in war and first in the hearts of his little boys."

"Why, Uncle George," exclaimed Ned in astonishment as the four lads entered the supper room an hour later, "I thought you weren't coming till next week."

"Is that why you spent the Fourth away from the house, you rascal? What have you been doing, I'd like to know?"

Ned looked at Jack and Jack looked at his feet. Then he turned to Sam and Sam asked loudly for butter, while Will was closely occupied in studying old china. Seeing no help at hand Ned coughed bashfully and muttered quickly: "We've been in the woods."

"Had any fireworks?" continued Uncle George mercilessly.

"No," was the laconic reply.

"Much fun?" supplemented Uncle George.

"Not much."

A short silence was broken by Miss Hattie's desultory remark:

"The hero's way is as hard as the transgressor's."

At the Lime Museum.

The Fat Woman—That's the last time I'll ever argue with the india-rubber man.

The Living Skeleton—Because why?

The Fat Woman—His arguments are so long-drawn out.

Panic on Board.

South Norwalk, Conn., July 1.—Seven hundred employes of the John W. Green hat factory left Danbury for an excursion to Glen island, the steamer Mohawk being chartered for the trip. After spending the day on the island the party boarded the steamer for the return trip at about 5 o'clock. The steamer had been under way about 10 minutes when the excursionists were startled by a tremendous crash, the ship having struck a rock.

A panic then followed, during which every one of the 700 passengers on board scrambled for the life preservers. In the crush which followed women and children were knocked down and trampled upon. One child had an arm broken, and another was picked up seriously injured about the body.

During the time the steamer had been steadily settling, and 10 minutes after the crash the first deck was submerged. Three launches which were near by when the accident occurred had by this time nearly reached the disabled steamer. They immediately went to the rescue of the passengers who jumped overboard. The passengers on the second deck were by this time in nearly as bad a predicament as their fellow excursionists on the first deck had been a short time before. The water was just beginning to wash over the deck when an excursion boat arrived from Glen island and took on board the remaining passengers.

Pan-American Completed.

Buffalo, N. Y., July 1.—The Pan-American exposition is finally past the preparation stage. It is a splendid, completed reality, and its beauty and interest are steadily increasing the attendance.

About 40,000 people have been entering the gates daily, and at the present rate of increase the number will be 60,000 soon. Preparations are being made for a big day July 4, and this is expected to bring the day's attendance to the record mark of Dedication day, when over 100,000 people passed through the gates.

All the northwestern exhibits have been in place for over two weeks, and though additions are constantly being made and various plans for improvements being carried out, no important changes will be made.

The showing is undoubtedly a remarkably good one, as is attested by the interest of visitors. Inquiries from people planning to go west are many each day, and already several people have started for Washington and Oregon—some investors with much capital—as a result of the work at the exposition. In this respect the Washington representatives are working with enthusiasm and actually accomplishing things.

Prices Paid in Spokane.

Poultry and eggs—Chickens, old, 9@10c per lb, live weight; ducks, $4 per doz; geese, dressed, 12c per lb; turkeys, live, 10@12c; dressed 12@13c; eggs, fresh, $4.25 per case.

Vegetables—Potatoes, $1.25 per cwt; onions, 3.50 per cwt.

Hides—Green hides and calf skins, 5@6c per lb; dry hides, butcher, 10@12c per lb.

Live stock—Beef, live steers, 4½c; dressed, 8c; live cows, 3½c; dressed, 7½c; veal calves, dressed, 7@9c; mutton, ewes, 3c; wethers, 3½c; hogs, live, $4.75@5 per cwt; dressed, $7 per cwt.

Sheepskins—Shearlings, 10c each; short wool pelts, 30@50c; medium wool, 50@75c; long wool, 75c@$1.

The local mills pay the following prices for grain, delivered: Club wheat, 44½c bulk, 46½c sacked; bluestem, 47c bulk, 49c sacked; red, 43c bulk, 44c sacked.

Americans Attempted to Loot.

Pekin, July 3.—Five men, calling themselves Americans, were captured by Chinese troops in a town 50 miles from Pekin, and were turned over to Major E. Robertson, commander of the United States legation guard here. The men, who were armed, demanded 5000 taels from the keeper of a pawnshop, and got 500. They filled five carts with plunder and then began shooting, not knowing that the town was occupied by 100 Chinese troops. The United States legation was notified and the quintet was brought in.

All parts of Pekin occupied by the British for police purposes have been turned over to the Chinese authorities.

Gomez in New York.

New York, June 30.—General Maximo Gomez has arrived in this city with his son Urban and Alexander Gonalez, state secretary to General Wood. A number of Cuban and American friends of the old soldier had gathered at the Pennsylvania Twenty-third street ferry to greet the general, and they cheered him heartily when he appeared. He smiled and spoke gratefully to a number of men and women. He looked very well. The party was met by T. Estrada Palma, formerly of the Cuban junta and representative of the Cuban revolutionary party, who took them to the Waldorf-Astoria.

Library for Detroit.

Detroit, July 3.—George W. Radford, member of the Detroit public library board, has received a letter from Andrew Carnegie, stating that Mr. Carnegie will contribute $75,000 toward the erection of a new public library building in this city.

Another Bank Fails.

Washington, July 1.—Comptroller of the Currency Dawes appointed a temporary receiver for the City National bank of Buffalo.