Whims of the Idler.

Last Twinges of the "Stay-at-Homes'" Torture.

Last Monday this brow-beaten victim of other people's weaknesses followed the same fabulous tactics he pursued several years ago when the Commander-in-Chief gave a folk tea.

In other words, he took to the Chickahominy Swamp.

In that neglected, mosquito-ridden haunt he rested his sedac and the cattails and the alder bushes, and chin deep in water he "lay low" and waited for certain things to simmer down.

This did, however, it was not the Commander-in-Chief and her petticoated fifth-cousins that drove him to the marsh, but grass and forced him to wallow in mud like a cow hippopotamus.

It was the summer vacation folks, who brave poverty and the city on Saturday and Monday, and who wanted to tell the overworked stay-at-homes all about their adventures and their delightful experiences.

It is all very sweet and lovely to fall on one's neck or even on the woman's neck, and ask him or her the very preventional question, "Did you have a good time?" But when the absentees flock home by the hundreds and each and every one seeks to babble his experiences, the thing grows maddening. There must have been a limit even to Lord Chesterfield's politeness.

With me last Monday it was either the Chickahominy Swamp or murder. Hence the swamp.

One would be folly able to suppress his homicidal tendencies when he came in contact with a summer vacation sufferer, were it not for the fact that those enterprising, hustling people assume a patronizing, pitying air towards stay-at-home heroes, and it drives the latter to extreme measures.

It's bad enough to have to sweat it out in the cities while others are lolling up their heels and living in the style of a century ago, but to have these beast mortals come home and rub it in on you, is more than the most patient, mild-eyed ox or a special lamb should stand.

* * *

For example, there is the neighbor of that lukes it. He was a spring chicken when I left the city, married to a real society belle, wife, children and all. These little troublesome incumbrances proved too much for him, and after trying to keep up with the Joneses, he decided to take a vacation. He went to Coney Island, or to get so many douches from Niagara Falls that I didn't know whether to wear a dress suit or to put on my rubber coat and galoshes.

Yes, they all began telling me about it Saturday, although I had previously been forewarned by a fusillade of picture postcards, so when Monday came it was me for the lush foliage and sodden shores of the Chickahominy.

Some of the coarse-fibred stay-at-homes held their ground and braved it out, as they have done summer after summer, but this fugitive had vacated no more of the foolish powders. He had shot the chutes at the seaside hotels and impersonated Sunny Jim at the serious fancy dress balls until his very imagination became spavined and he showed the whites of his eyes at every man, woman and child who had been away for the summer.

Finally the only sweet thing about it all is the thought of my solate, comfortable and altogether normal old friend Magimus, who was allowed two weeks' rest and had the philosophy to spend it all right at home pottering about the books and irritating his wife by sticking his nose into her housekeeping affairs.

Magimus says he enjoyed it unspeakably, his wife says—well, she doesn't know whether she did or not; but the friends of this pooling know they enjoyed it, for Magimus hasn't undertaken to tell a soul what he did or to patronize a single soul who failed to break away from the rut-drill.

Would there were others like this tranquil soul. Whose companionship is as soothingly restful as that of an old but well fitting shoe.

The Sins of Society.

To determine the views of an upper class will always abuse the lower. His vocabulary is such that it will not be wearing off the green chalk was if it has the wish or means to compass them; and if it has not, it will not be appreciably the better for hearing them described and cleaved. The case of the "Tenderloin against society" as Stevenson has worded it, is that there is always present a "general element of guilt," if and to the prosecutor, to the beater.

There is no obscurity about the facts. No one needs to be convinced that immorality and gambling are wrong. But if they are associated with a particular class, men and women who do not belong to that class will not take warning—they will be inclined to think that the reason applies to them, but will feel only a perverse self-righteous satisfaction in this drawing of the veil from a life which they believe to be more desirable than their own.

All preaching at classes is apt to have this unwelcome result. It does not touch the culprits, who are, most of the adversaries, and it stimulates idle curiosity and an unpardonable satisfaction in others who should be better employed to reflect on their own shortcomings.—From the London Spectator.

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

By F. W. FITZPATRICK.

Shaken as was San Francisco on the morning of April 18th, she was undoubtedly but at the edge of the disturbance. Had the main line of the "fault" been directly through the city instead of six miles west of it, little would have been left to tell the tale. As it was, that line passed well to the westward. Oakland people contend that they were as badly shaken as were the San Franciscans, but a careful inspection of their buildings and other evidences does not support this contention. Moreover, the shock, even in San Francisco, was more severe at the west than at the east. True, the destruction, the terrible fire, was all to the eastward, but that was merely accident. A much less tremor would have been sufficient to fracture chimneys and otherwise make fires possible that, with the absence of water and proper fire-fighting organization, might have grown into a disastrous a conflagration.

All evidences point that the trend of force was northwestward, and virtually twisted everything in the city in the direction of the southeast. Lumber piles were so turned, their upper halves angleways to their lower halves, that remained stationary; and so with chimneys and all heavy bodies that were moved only by the great first shock. Lighter objects were twisted and tumbled in every direction by the succeeding minor tremors and the final, if we can call it, readjustment of the earth's crust. The buildings indicate and scientists corroborate that the first great shock twisted everything eastward, as does a ferry boat striking her berth forward and on the west side. There then followed a less severe tremor or readjustment westward, and an undulating movement from south to north, as the wave or wake left by a boat in the water. Next there seemed to be a distinct upraising, and then an jiter and sudden collapse to normal, and since that day there have been thirty or more distinct but comparatively insignificant shocks, as if old Mother Earth were indeed nervous and fretful after her wild rampage.

Buildings show some peculiar and at first sight seemingly freaky effects of the quake. The greater part of their damage, however, can be more directly attributed to the stupidity or carelessness of their erectors than to the awfulness of the quake. Nothing but the rankest stupidity or the most gambling instinct could prompt a man to an outlay of many hundred thousand dollars in a building in a city subject to earthquakes, resting that structure on an insecure foundation, in loosely filled land and with the different parts of the structure improperly tied together. That earthquake and the subsequent fire laid bare some of the worst sins of construction, that it has not been my misfortune to see. Presumable there is as much stupidity or carelessness in construction generally throughout the country, in all other cities, only they have not yet been uncovered, pitilessly exposed. One thing demonstrated beyond cavil is that a well, properly well-built structure, upon a perfect foundation, is the least damaged in an earthquake. Both buildings in San Francisco, in which the various parts were well tied together and all to the steel frame suffered only in the loss of some glass and plaster—as far as earthquake damage is concerned. As for fire, those building that were of brick and terra-cotta exterior, steel frame, well protected with fireproof tile, properly set in plaster and with a suitably well built tile floors and partitions and where windows were protected by wired glass, stairways enclosed and such other precautions taken (seldom many of them in any one buildings), they were correspondingly immune to damage and suffered accordingly. Other buildings where fewer or none of such reasonable precautions were taken, were shattered and battered by quake and fell easy prey to the flames.

Naturally, whatever damage was done to the tall buildings was most severe at about the middle of the structure's height. Any structural member long horizontally and overweighted is bound to break at or near the middle, and so with ever-loaded or otherwise bent vertical members, the line of fracture or least resistance usually shows itself in the middle. Architects should keep that well in mind, and where earthquake is probable, should brace and tie that terrain of their buildings most thoroughly.

The full extent of the geological "fault" that caused this particular quake will probably never be known. Its worse effects were felt and evidences left on a line from Salinas to Point Arena, while minor indications exist to a distance of fully three hundred and fifty miles along the coast. In places this "fault" is clearly shown by actual fissures in the earth of eight or more feet in width. The severity of the resulting shock is clearly shown by torn and riven cliffs and landslides all along the coast, though in places the actual line of "fault" is a mile or more at sea.

Of course, any such catastrophe, accompanied by so awful a toll, is bound to leave a most lasting impression and fear in the people. Recurrences are expected, and every one is more or less nervous and apprehensive of even the rumble of a cart in the street. We can have no assurance that as severe, if not a worse, quake will not be felt next year or to-morrow, but we can take some comfort in the fact that scientists believe that the subterranean forces thus broken loose have found certain vents and freedom that will keep them, so to speak, pacified, and they draw considerable considerable consolation from the knowledge that the slight shock of '06 seemed to secure comparative immunity for nearly forty years.

This particular shock was felt as severely at Santa Rosa, Palo Alto and San Jose as it was in San Francisco, and the surrounding country about, and with a jerk and a jump that could be felt to a distance of fully three hundred miles along the line of the fault. Santa Rosa, Palo Alto and San Jose are all in the alluvial valley, and the shock was felt in a manner quite different from the effect on San Francisco. Instead of the sharp, quick, jerky motion, it was a long, undulating, rolling motion, like the rolling of a ship in a heavy sea, and it lasted much longer than the shock felt in San Francisco. The effect on the people was quite different, too. Instead of being panic-stricken, they seemed to be more bewildered, as if they could not realize that such a thing was within the realm of possibility. Mother looked after the dinner, and was startled when she stepped in a drop that had fallen from a pail of water, and she looked at her feet and made a mental note that she should have a new rug in the dining room. The baby toddled across the floor, fifty feet away. Then the father wouldn't come right. It was sticky stuff, and wouldn't write up properly at all for market. We were upsetted until, and day when we were entering milking, rather noticed that before old Heffy's milk was strained into the batch the milk was all right.

"A great light dawned upon us. We separated the milk after that, and there was no further trouble with the dairy products.

"But, oh, the fun we had experimenting with old Heffy's milk! We boys would collect a lot of it and then try to make butter with it. Hardly a day passed but that one of us had a new rubber doll, and the other boys on the neighborhood couldn't understand where the supply came from. We weren't allowed to tell, for father said it would sound like a lie, and we were taught always to avoid anything that sounded unreasonable. Father argued that a person might almost as well be a liar as to have the reputation, and—what?

"Well, we were having a good time with old Heffy's milk. We fed her sugar and lapsin on the sly and charmed the finest chewing gum you ever saw or tasted. Diluted with a little hot water her fresh milk made the daintiest meringue you ever tasted, and for repairing broken china or glass nothing was better than to tie the cracked ones together and fill a little of old Heffy's milk stand in it for an hour or so, one day we didn't come home to dinner. We worried a lot about her. We went in search two of the other boys and I and loved her howling piteously, but couldn't find her for quite a while locate her. We found her stuck to a tree in a corner of the wood lot. She had licked against it to scratch off a fly which she was persecuting and couldn't quite come to save her.

"I don't know how the matter would have ended only after awhile, of course, the rubber plants were exhausted, and we had to get the old girl on some other sort of food. She cried real tears of sorrow—yes, that's proof boys, when she had to give up the feed of her heart, but it had to be. She refused so long to eat that she became famished and ravenous, and when Bumper Bill carelessly turned her back on a young clover patch, she went at it with a will and nearly scaring herself in the most terrible way.

"Well, it happened after that was totally supposing that she got a case of clover blind. Nothing is more probable under the conditions, one can readily understand the result of the generation of clover gas in a cow that was practically made of rubber. I went after the cow that night, and saw floating about above my head what appeared to be a balloon. Bill has stuck out from it and a frostbitted tail floated in the breeze. I think that was Heffy. At any rate, she never came home.

"That night we were all awakened by a mighty explosion. And the next morning Bumper Harry found in the woods close by an old sharp-pointed snag a lot of elastic material, from which mother made every one of us a mackintosh. Poor old Heffy. She had solved the aerial navigation problem for the first time, like other experimenters, struck a snag and was punctured, proves that she also was not dirigible."

The Tale of the Rubber Cow

Result of a Dietetic Experiment With Rubber Plants.

By STRICKLAND W. GILLILAN.

"I SUPPOSE," said my friend, "that Mr. Edison, forgetting that it Needs Art, Art Nickels mainly invested in those sealed gold mines in Mexico. It wouldn't ever have happened."

A loss of some ensued, in which no one spoke from a sting about it or betrayed the least interest, so The Liar went on:

"Art Nickels had a bad for a good name to me. It was a fad not one farmer in a million would ever have thought of, and that no one was on earth but Art would have taken it up after it was going to over. It was not A case of art for Art's—what? Well, then I won't.

"I was just going to say that Art had been the Indianapolis a time or two and had seen some of those 'ye ye plants,' you know, all the rage for a while, consisting of a big leaf, and adopted on a hump. You never know just where a fad is going to hit a mind. Art had been just idle enough to want all of his life and could probably have gone on in a sort of restless rest if he hadn't stumbled upon those 'rubber plants.' When he got a hump came over him. He dropped out, looked at those plants for an hour, and before he went home that night he bought them.

"Peter on he bought them, again to the disgust of his wife, who was a belle for dress and had been elected a good dollar for wardrobe in consequence on a score of priority. So he was good money going into something that wasn't even a form of reserve. Dora put her to the test, as to her temper, and she gave Art the problem.

"But Art was, it's a question if he ever found her. He watered and fed and cared those plants for some months, time and time around his chafing, saying he wasn't over the bad part. It was in the spring he started to enjoy, and in June fell to bad accomplished result, a crop of the dumb fellows, also a lot of blooming strange stock that looked good to him, principally because he got it cheap, and because he had heard that rubber trees grew wild in Old Mexico.

"Though the mining stock was cheap, the assessment Art spent on it broke him, and when he found that the mines had been salted he was all in. He allowed it.

"Then came the hardest thing he had ever had to do. He must dispose of the rubber plants. Wives was coming on, and he didn't have enough to clothe his family decently and keep them in school. He drew everything from off of Exchange, first for leaving those rubber plants from freezing during the cold days. Father didn't take me more than—I don't know. I don't any fad in that line—I will not from cheap and massive I mean—I mean taken pitiful that rubber plants were sold for cows.

"Well, anyway, though, about noon Dora came home and found Art in a hump. Dora was a Presbyterian and Art was a Episcopalian, and Dora was a Presbyterian and Art was a Episcopalian, and Dora was a Presbyterian and Art was a Episcopalian, and