

After Dinner Gossip.

Cunning of the Indian Crocodile.

The crocodile is, it appears, a much more intelligent creature than its appearance seems to indicate. From a description given of its peculiar methods by a native Bengali paper, it must be endowed with as much cunning as that human innocent, the Buer farmer. What, for instance (asks the "Globe") could be more "slim" than the trick by which it comes within grabbing distance of a horse or a cow tethered near the bank of a river? To land and attempt capture by pursuit would be fruitless toll. The saurian accordingly lies concealed near the bank until opportunity offers for it quietly to tug and carry away the peg to which its hoped-for prey is tethered. Feeling the pull of the cord, and imagining that its master proposes to fix the peg at some other place where there is fresh pasture, the deluded victim obediently follows to the edge of the water, where it is instantly seized and dragged down. But human smartness is fully equal to that of the crocodile. A dead kid is obtained, and the body is stuffed with dry quicklime, and neatly sewn up. This bait is then placed close to the water's edge, and, being compact and of comparatively small size, is bolted whole as a sort of whet for a more solid meal. But before long the crocodile feels somewhat uncomfortable and so thirsty that it must drink. After that there are strange commotions in the river, and the crocodile is cremated internally by the chemical action of the water on the quick-lime.

Flag Pong on the French Riviera.

A correspondent of the "Globe" writes from the French Riviera: "In several hotels I could mention ping pong tables are set up in the entrance halls, and for the sum of one or two francs an hour the balls and rackets can be obtained from the concierge, who, if it is his own perquisite, must make a good thing out of his investment. Nothing is more irritating to the quiet smoker or reader than the everlasting ping pong, accompanied by the hilarious exclamations of the young people, in guttural German, high-flavoured Americanese, or one's own native tongue. A crusty old gentleman I know said recently, 'What do you tell me they pay for this? A franc an hour? I would willingly give double the amount if they would leave off.' The next day I did not see him, and on inquiry the following morning I heard that he had left. I verily believe that ping pong did it. On sounding the manager on this untoward event, he looked grave, and hurriedly changed the conversation. In the Avenue de la Gare at Nice in a shop noted for its 'Articles Anglais,' I saw a box with 'Pim Pam' in large letters upon it, which presumably contained the elements of this fascinating and fashionable craze. Notwithstanding the pronounced Anglophobia existing over here I would lay odds that 'Pim Pam' will before long become the rage, and who shall say that an International Tournament may not be arranged.

"Same Here" Soon.

The domestic problem in America is in a much worse tangle than here, and it would seem that householders will eventually find their salvation in "travelling kitchens." They call at your door at any hour, and you can have any meal done to a turn and nicely served. The travelling kitchen is a huge motor-car—in appearance very like Black Maria. The interior is divided into trays or "carriers," and the same tray keeps soup boiling hot and an ice pudding firmly frozen, but a few inches of tinned space dividing the two. There are also parlour and housemaid brigades in connection with the kitchens. They come at the time appointed, do all

the work wanted in a smart, well-trained manner, and leave everything in apple-pie order.

An Essay on Hair.

"As for hair, I consider it a mighty dangerous thing. Absolum found it so, and the man who is scalped by Indians always wishes that he had been born without hair, and never been able to grow it. Did you ever read about the woman who poisoned a man by feeding him with chopped hair? She cut it up so fine that you could hardly see it, and gave it to the man in his food. It killed him by slow torture, much as if it had been home-made wedding cake, and the doctors couldn't detect it, as they would have detected wedding cake. Every now and then a man is choked to death by a hair sticking in his throat, and no careful man will ever eat butter in a strange house for fear of being choked. And then think of the misery that hair on a man's coat may cause. I knew a man whose home was broken up, and his wife divorced from him, merely because he came home two or three times with a long red hair on the left shoulder of his coat. The man was innocent, too, for the hairs were put on his coat by a mischievous boy, and besides, the girl that his wife ought to have been jealous of, if she had known the facts, had black hair." —W. L. Alden in "To-day."

Sixty Bananas at a Meal.

To eat sixty bananas at one meal, besides other food, may fairly be described as a large order, even for a medium-sized giant, but the extensiveness of the meal becomes appalling when we learn that it is consumed by a dwarf. Yet this is a common occurrence.

These dwarfs are pigmies who live on the confines of the Congo Free State; they are nomadic, and are, for small people, mighty hunters. It is not surprising to find that the result of this meal is to make the consumer lie and groan during the greater part of the night, but the lesson is not taken to heart, and the act of gluttony is repeated day after day.

'Beef, Lemons, and Cheese.'

While passing Cherbourg, en route from South Africa to London, the late Mr Cecil Rhodes once observed several vessels of the French channel squadron drawn up in line to salute the ex-Empress Eugenie's yacht. The Frenchmen, who were spread out on the yard of their vessels, shouted "Vive l'Imperatrice!"

The captain of the vessel on which Mr Rhodes was a passenger, wishing to show his respect to the Empress, got his men ready to salute, but in the short time at his disposal he could not school his crew to repeat the French words.

"Tell them to say 'Beef, lemons, and cheese,'" suggested Mr Rhodes. Shouted at a distance these words might sound sufficiently like the Frenchmen's cry, though Mr Rhodes' suggestion, of course, was made playfully. To his utter amazement the yacht was greeted with a deafening yell of 'Beef, lemons and cheese!' which entirely drowned the voices of the French sailors. The ex-Empress is stated to have expressed great pleasure at the compliment afterward.

A Quarrel in the Street.

About ten o'clock the other morning two men met and began threatening and calling each other names. One finally called the other a liar, and the two were about to grapple, when a woman opened the door and said:

"Gentlemen, are you about to fight?"
"We are!" they answered together.
"Then have the kindness to wait a

moment," she continued. "My husband has been sick for weeks, and is just now able to sit up. He is very downhearted this morning; and if you'll only wait till I can draw him up to the window, I know he'll be very grateful to both of you."

She disappeared in the house, and, after one look into each other's faces, the men smiled, shook hands, and departed together.

New Airship for the War Office.

At a meeting of the Aeronautical Institute and Club, held in London, an interesting lecture was given by Dr. Barton on the construction of airships. Dr. Barton said the new airship which he was now constructing for the War Office would be 180ft in length, and would weigh nearly 10,000lb. The deck would be about 10ft long, and the machine would carry seven or eight persons, five being required to work it. The machine would be driven by three pairs of propellers arranged on the sides of the car, each pair being worked by a 45 horse-power petrol motor. Attached to the machine would be an automatic water-balancing apparatus, which would keep it always perfectly horizontal, even when passengers were walking along the deck. The framework of the machine would be made of tubular steel, and braced together by steel wire in tension. He estimated that the machine would be able to travel at the rate of 25 miles an hour, and remain in the air for a period of 48 hours.

How He was Handicapped.

He was a policeman, and a tremendously large one. He loomed up like a huge blue elephant, and as the lady waited on the corner near him for a tram-car, she couldn't help saying something about his size, he looked so good-natured. She rather inclined to believe that it was in the way.

"Well, no'm," he said, "it comes very handy when I've got to push and shove through a crowd, or to reach around and help a lot of ladies over the street, or to catch a runaway and swing onto him, but, ma'am," and he sighed, "when it comes to buying pants, ready made, it's h—"

The conclusion rather startled the lady by its unexpectedness, but the big man was so innocent about it that she could only laugh.

Asleep for Nineteen Years.

The Paris correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph" states:—Great interest is being displayed in the case of Mlle. Bouyevnal, who for nearly 19 years has been in a state of catalepsy, taking neither meat nor drink, and to all appearance dead, save for the regular but almost imperceptible beatings of the heart. Marguerite Bouyevnal, who lies in a little bed on the ground floor of her mother's cottage, in the village of Thenelles, near Saint Quentin, is now nearly 38 years old. She has been visited by hosts of people, including a number of medical celebrities, and all sorts of theories have been put forward by way of accounting for her condition. The local physicians are of opinion that the trouble was caused by some violent emotion, and this view was set forth by an expert in his report to the Saint Quentin Court, which, years ago, went into this very peculiar case. Now, however, the idea is started that Marguerite Bouyevnal may have been magnetised, and not having afterwards been properly aroused, may thus have remained in a state of hypnotic catalepsy.

Philosophy of a Lie.

"Do you know that Tomlinson is just like George Washington?"
"Why?"
"He can't tell a lie."
"Can't tell a lie! He is the most gigantic liar in town."
"Impossible!"
"Nothing of the sort. There is not a man of his acquaintance who believes a word that he says."
"That proves what I say, for without deception there is no lie, and as no one believes Tomlinson he can't tell a lie."

A Muddled One.

At a football match the other day one of the players at "back" seemed rather nervous at clearing an awkward ball from a centre kick. For a moment the home goal was in danger.

There was a hushed silence that fell on the crowd present, but it was soon broken. A rough voice shouted to the hesitating player:

"Kick it hard, Charlie! Think it's Mr. Kipling!"

An Aucklanders' Nightmare.

Once there was an Auckland citizen who fell asleep and had a horrible dream.

He dreamed that the city had become so intolerably dirty that men, despairing of ever seeing any improvement in its streets or in its atmosphere, were moving to other cities in droves.

He dreamed that a general apathy as to public improvements had settled down upon the doomed city. Either there was not enough money raised by taxation to keep things moving, or it was unwisely expended.

He dreamed that the prevailing dry rot had extended to the schools, and that some of the most important branches had been discontinued.

He dreamed that the fire department had become crippled by the palsy that was affecting every other part of the municipal body, and that destructive fires were of frequent occurrence.

He dreamed that the rich and prosperous men still remaining in the city were apparently content with this state of affairs, and instead of holding indignation meetings and organising for the purpose of restoring the old civic pride and prosperity went calmly on making money and paying no attention to anything else.

And then he woke—and, b'ho'd, it was no dream, but a sober reality!

Obliging.

Once two gentlemen attended a temperance meeting and on returning home by a dark and narrow lane were thrown out of their conveyance. The incident was reported in the local paper, and the account closed with the words: "Fortunately both men were sober." The editor received an angry letter from one of the gentlemen concerned requesting an apology. He was equal to the occasion. "In our account of the unfortunate accident to Messrs —," wrote the editor, "We stated that fortunately both men were sober. It appears this statement has given great offence. We therefore beg to withdraw it."

The Plague has come to light again
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