

## CASTLES IN THE AIR.

AERIAL MONASTERIES IN ODD CORNERS OF THE WORLD.

Built Far Aloft for Safety—Some Can Be Reached Only by Rope and Windless or Swinging Ladders—An Ideal Spot for Peace and Repose.

The monasteries of Meteora, near Larissa and the Gulf of Salonica, in Turkey, are in very literal castles in the air. The ideal of every monastery is high, and those at Meteora translate this aspiration into brick and mortar.

They were originally set far aloft in their inaccessible situation for the sake of safety; but in many cases even such precaution has proved inadequate. A few years ago only eight of the original twenty-two were inhabited, the remainder having been destroyed, often by artillery fire from commanding positions in the vicinity. Since then St. Stephen's, too, has gone the way of the majority.



### HOW TO REACH BARIAM MONASTERY.

This was the only monastery which could be entered on foot, a plank drawbridge spanning the abyss which divided it from the adjacent mountain. "Herdons," or Turkish irregular guards, lay in ambush near, and on the bridge being lowered in the morning, rushed in, robbing and destroying.

Disappointed of the rich booty they expected, the invaders proceeded to torture and kill many of the monks. Indeed, in the first Greek War of Revolution, all the monks would probably have been massacred had it not been for the English and Russian Consuls at Larissa.

The remainder of the monasteries can be entered only by means of a rope, windlass and net, in which one sits and is drawn up to a window several hundred feet above, or by rope ladders fastened against the side of the cliff. Either method is somewhat trying to the nerves, for the slightest giddiness on the swinging ladders would probably prove fatal. The monks themselves usually use the ladders, and look like black flies crawling up the face of the rock. They climb with the body bent almost double, and hands and feet close to the rock.



### CHINESE MONASTERY IN THE RIVER YANG-TSE-KIANG.

Altogether, it is quite an ideal spot for a fortnight's perfect peace and repose, safe from the many worries of our modern frantic civilization; but let the intending visitor beware of the numerous brigands, official and otherwise, who can be relied on to make things extremely unpleasant for the unfortunate tourist who should fall into their hands.

Besides these interesting "air castles" in Turkey, there is one even more interesting in China. It is the dwelling place and the temple of a little band of monastic priests on the top and side of a great rock in the middle of the Yang-tse-Kiang River. It is a little below Hankow and not much visited by tourists. It has all the charms of a mountain home, and is one of the most picturesque sights in Asia.

**Armor Plate.**  
The thickness of armor on modern warships is truly astonishing. The side armor of a first class battle ship usually varies from 16½ inches thick at the top of the belt to 9½ inches at the bottom. The gun turrets are often protected by armor 15 inches to 17 inches thick.

## USED TO BE LUCKY.

The Number Thirteen Was Not Unlucky in Olden Times.

Thirteen! There are probably few men who in the innermost recesses of their hearts have not some kind of an unpleasant emotion when it comes to 13. Of course, there are some men who protest loudly—and usually in some ludicrous company—that 13 is simply an old figure, like 17 and 19 and many others, and such men have formed the Thirteens, thus, or thirteen members who on the 13th of a month, particularly if this date happens to fall on a Friday, eat a meal at thirteen courses at the thirteenth hour of the day.

This is doubt, of course, to break the superstition attaching to 13, but this superstition will not down. For the love of the marvelous and mystic will not down. Were not Anna, Scipio, Caesar, Wallenstein, Napoleon and others superstitious? Is it not historical fact that many of our great men were under a spell and underwent no great action without having first consulted some medium?

It is well known that all the nations of the old world were in more or less intellectual rapport. The ideas of one tribe were not so far from those of another. But it is certainly interesting to learn that the figure 13 had its sacred and divine meaning also in America of yore, among the long since extinct tribes of the Indians and the Aztecs. The inhabitants of Peru counted seven days, without any particular name, in the week. Their year had seven times fifty-two days, or four times 13 weeks. The Aztecs were compelled to support his high priestly claim to the 13th year. The Aztecs had weeks of 13 days, each with a special name. Their public archives were of circular form, with 13 in the center of each of the 13 disks, and 13 were their tribes.

Thus the brief ancient history of 13, and it may be said of modern times in Germany that even to-day a "baker's dozen" is 13, that is, the original twelve, with one thrown in for luck.

**Fishes That Fall Upwards.**  
This phenomenon cannot be witnessed everywhere. You must go out to the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and then let yourself down into the sea for about two miles. If you wish to test the fact. At this depth the pressure of the water is very great—so great, in fact, that the fish, being used to the great weight, dare not enter shallow water for fear of falling upwards and bursting. Fishes which are adapted to considerable depths may accidentally leave the bottom, swimming toward the surface. This allows the gases in their bodies to expand slightly, and thus renders them more buoyant. The more the gases expand, the more buoyant they become, and the greater is the difficulty of returning to the depths, until finally the buoyancy of the body becomes so great that they are no longer able to return to the bottom. They continue to rise to the surface more and more rapidly, until the expanding of the gases in the body kills them. As soon as the bodies reach the surface, the release of all other pressure causes them to burst into pieces.

### Embarrassed by a Devilfish.

A diver engaged in Moynie River in Australia had a terrible experience with a sea-devil. Having fired off a charge of dynamite and displaced a large quantity of stones, he went to the bottom of the river and while engaged in rolling over a large stone he saw something moving about in front of him. This dark object came in contact with him and he felt about his arm. The diver walked slowly and painfully along with the sea-devil's feelers twined about his body and legs. He made tracks for the ladder and gained the bank, a curious looking object, indeed, with this huge, ugly thing entangled about his body. With the help of the sailors he was in time freed from his submarine companion. The body of the octopus was only about the size of a large soup plate, with eyes like a sheep's, but possessed nine arms, each four feet in length, at the butt as thick as a man's wrist and tapering off at the end like a pen-knife. All along the under part of the feelers of this strange sea creature are suckers every quarter of an inch, giving it immense power.

### Need No Water.

We are so accustomed to drinking water that we hardly ever stop to consider how much we might suffer if suddenly deprived of this freest and best of beverages. Water in some form is necessary to preserve the health of humans, but there are animals that seem to have little if any use for the liquid. The llamas of Patagonia, for instance, are said to never taste of water, and certain kinds of gazelles that are native to the dry wastes of the orient seem to thrive without it. A parakeet lived 52 years in the London zoological gardens without drinking any water. Some naturalists assert that the rabbit never drinks, being content with the dew that stands on the grass that it nibbles while feeding at night. Many reptiles live in arid wastes apparently destitute of water. In the neighborhood of Lozer, France, are herds of cows and goats that seemingly rarely drink, yet they produce a fine quality of milk from which is made the famous Roquefort cheese.

### An Immense Army.

Russia possesses the largest standing army on earth. Every year some 280,000 conscripts join the Russian forces which in time of peace number 1,000,000 men. On a war-footing this rises to 2,500,000, and calling out the reserves would increase it to 6,047,000 well-trained soldiers. Should necessity arise, the militia would be called out, bringing the czar's forces up to 9,000,000 men.

### A Moonless Month.

February, 1893, was in one way the most wonderful month in the world's history. It had no full moon. January had two full moons, and so had March; but February had none. This remarkable state of things had never happened before since the era we assign to the creation.

In the hotels built in China for the use of foreigners the highest stories are the most expensive because the breeziest.

## DIAMOND PAVEMENT.

THE KIMBERLEY ROAD CONTAINS FORTUNES IN PRECIOUS STONES.

The Public There Travel on a High Road Literally Growing With Diamonds—One Small Piece of Road the Size of a Bedroom Yielded \$100,000 Worth.

It is not often that it is given to man, outside of the favored gentleman who figured in the stirring story of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp and kindred productions of rich Oriental imagination, to travel daily on a highroad literally growing with diamonds. When such an unusual privilege is vouchsafed, it would appear to be the proper thing to admit that one might lose the very ground he walked on. Until a few years ago there was such a road, and it was neither a vision of the pipe nor the press agent. It was located in the Kimberley district in South Africa, and when a man walked over it he walked over millions of dollars worth of the precious stones.

Five thousand dollars a yard was the record of some parts of the road. The diamonds are not there now, so it will do the gentle reader no good to take a ticket for Kimberley and seek to find a fortune in the street. It seems that when the diamond mining industry was some years younger than it is to-day, there was a vexing scarcity of water in the Kimberley country. So, when a miner couldn't get a supply of water to help him in his search, he had to do the best he could and huddle around with his tools in the dry earth. He would spade here and there, until he struck a lump of earth which he eagerly sought prize. Then he would abandon the little mound of earth his spade had overturned and seek for diamonds in another place. After a while, several years in fact, these mounds amounted to a considerable obstruction to travel and further digging. The loose earth was in the way, but no one would volunteer to clear it away. Finally the Kimberley municipal council offered to use the dirt in unacquainted roads around the city, which was branching out and reaching quite respectable proportions. The offer was gladly accepted by the mine owners, and the mounds were cleared away.

Nearly a score of years after there was a drop in the diamond market. The price of the stones fell, and in order to bring about a return of high figures, the mine owners decided to restrict their output. The necessitated a big cut in the pay roll, and as a result, the Kimberley district was soon over-run with unemployed miners. Then some of the wise men in the land came to the conclusion that they might pick up a few overlooked gems from the highroad if they could get municipal permission and a plentiful supply of water. They got both, for each year a portion of the road which had been strengthened by the mound dirt was turned over to the men, and they worked in it with astonishing results. Diamonds to the value of \$200,000 were recovered nearly for several years. From one little piece of road no bigger than a bed room there was taken \$100,000 worth of diamonds.

### The Original Rock of Ages.

Sir William H. Willis, member of Parliament for Bristol, writes of the origin of Augustus Montague Toplady's grand hymn, "The Rock of Ages," as follows:  
"Toplady was one day overtaken by a heavy thunderstorm in Buntingford, on the edge of my property, a rocky glen running up into the heart of the Mendips range, and there, taking shelter between two massive pillars of our native limestone rock, he penned the hymn."



### "ROCK OF AGES."

An illustration of the rock is here given. This is the hymn as Toplady wrote it:

Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hid myself in thee.  
Let the water and the blood  
From thy side, a healing food,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save from wrath and keep me pure.

Should my tears forever flow,  
Should my zeal no longer glow,  
When I rise to worlds unknown  
And behold thee on thy throne,  
Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee.

### The Queen Bee.

A queen bee sometimes lays at the rate of two eggs a minute, and the total weight of the eggs is one and a half times that of her own body on a summer day. As she lives four or five years, she must lay about 1,500,000 eggs in the course of her life. Her eyes are smaller than those of the other bees, owing to long residence in the hive. Her sting is 300 times smaller in diameter than a pin, and as she can seldom draw it out after stinging a person, she leaves it in and dies afterward.

### Prodigality.

Quizzer—What do you understand by wasting one's substance in riotous living?  
Guyer—Buying stuff that you can't reverse, I suppose?

**Steel Pens.**  
The world uses 3,500,000 steel pens a day.

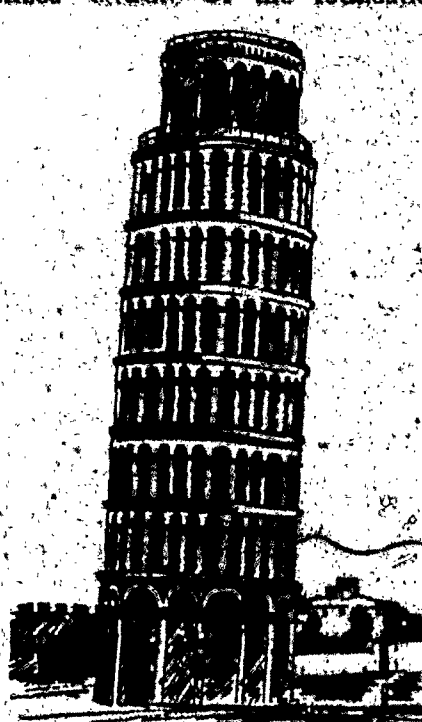
## SHAVING IN PORTO RICO.

They Have No Use for Razors on the Out-island.

The natives of our new territory, Porto Rico, have no need to buy soap, for the wooded country abounds in plants whose leaves and barks supply most fully the place of that indispensable article. Among the best of these is the sapotro, so called, though it is more a bush than a tree. Its bulb when rubbed on wet clothes makes a snow-white lather, which has an odor like old brown Windsor soap. The Porto Ricans, who are all, from the highest to the lowest, dandies in their way, make soap out of cocount and home-made lye—and a fine soap it is, smooth and fragrant. This cocount oil soap is used for shaving. When a man wishes to have a shave in the morning he starts out with his cocount shell cup and his donkey tail brush and bottle. It is never any trouble to find an empty bottle in Porto Rico, Cuba, Jamaica, or almost any of the larger West India islands, even in remote spots in the mountains. At least twenty generations of thirty people have lived there and thrown away bottles. The man carries no mirror; he is too poor to own such a luxury. Not one house in twenty in Porto Rico has even the very cheapest looking-glass. But, consequently, rich nature provides the mirror, as well as the soap. The man goes to some convenient pool in the mountain stream where the water is quite still—there is his mirror. He breaks his bottle on a stone, and daffily picks out a sharp piece of suitable size. Then he lathers his face profusely, and begins to scrape away with his piece of glass, which in his hands works as well as the best steel razor. A cut, or even a slight scratch, is extremely rare as a result of this at fresco form of shaving.

### The Leaning Tower of Pisa.

This is one of many leaning towers in Italy. There are two very notable ones at Bologna. The tower at Pisa is the campanile or bell tower of the cathedral, but, as is common in the older Italian churches, is detached from it. It is 50 feet in diameter and 178 high. The walls at the base are 3 feet thick. It leans 13 feet from the perpendicular. It has usually been supposed that those leaning towers inclined because of the foundations.



### PISA'S LEANING TOWER.

Settling, but it is certain that some of them were intentionally so constructed, and when one considers the improbability of a building as massive as this, and only 134 times its diameter in height settling in a way neither to cause its destruction nor even crack it, he is strongly inclined to the belief that it was the fashion of the age so to build towers. This was erected in 1174.

### Sparrows Fight Like Game Cocks.

Sparrows are the most determined fighters among the birds, the bulldogs among the four-footed animals being the nearest to these little pests in point of grit and endurance. Two of them were recently observed in a fierce combat on the roof of a house. In the fury of battle they reared the edge of the roof and one toppled over, instantly the other flew to the top of him and forced him to the pavement, where the contest was resumed as fiercely as ever. They took no notice of a bystander who approached the angry birds and picked up both of them. After carrying them a little distance he set them free, but their spirit was unbroken, and they went at it again, bill and claw. By and by one of them gave in and fled, but his chase was not generous enough to let him be, for he gave chase, but whether he caught him or not the onlooker was unable to learn. Wherever they may roam these birds may always be relied upon for impudence and quarrelsomeness.

### To Cure Greasy Hairs.

"Cheap shoes are not necessarily of poor material," said a shoe clerk. "Creaking often accounts for the low price. Cheap double-soled shoes nearly always creak, and the reason is that two soles do not quite fit or one is of more pliable material than the other, so that they rub against each other. Among the remedies usually tried is soaking the shoes in water or oil. This is effective for a time, but the cure is only temporary. The creak invariably returns in a few days. However, there is one certain and simple remedy. It is to drive three little wooden pegs into the sole. The pegs prevent the friction of the soles. Any cobbler will do it for you for 10 cents, and so not only restore your own peace of mind but also that of your friends."

### Wetter Than a Gold Mine.

The profit from a single whale that is captured is very large. One about fifty-nine feet long weighs 140,000 pounds and will give 60,000 pounds of blubber, from which 45,000 pounds of train-oil can be made, and 3,000 pounds of whalebone.

### The Sultan's Plate.

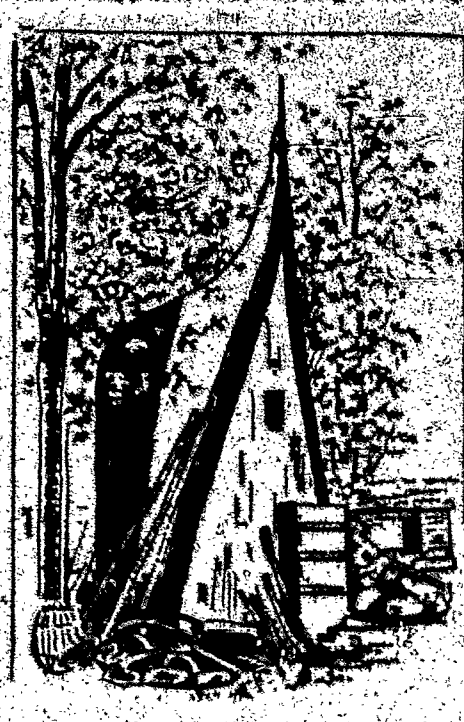
Among the Sultan's gold plate there are dishes of solid gold of extraordinary size, and there are plates, cups and saucers, tumblers and pitchers, massive and heavy, made of the same precious metal.

## AN ODD LANDMARK.

A SIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS TO EXCITE THE INTEREST OF PASSENGERS.

The Uphoveed New Section of the Earth Caprice Is Now Used as a Landing-place for the Naval and Immigrant Operations of Which It Was Intended.

One of the most curious landmarks along Long Island Sound, and one that never fails to excite the interest of the sightseer, was seen it for the first time, stands on the shore of Northport Bay. From the distance it looks like a large Indian totem. On a closer view it is seen to be the bow of a finely modelled yacht, apparently sticking right up out of the earth. Approaching closer, the puzzled sightseer discovers it is really a house. This freak structure stands in Hawkins's shipyard, overlooking the bay.



### THE ODD LANDMARK.

Its history involves the story of a novel and ingenious operation on the old steam yacht Caprice, by which she was transformed into another boat and a building. The Caprice was sixty-six feet long and was purchased in 1895 by Benjamin M. Whitbeck, who had planned a large house. He decided to have a large house, and wanted her to be a building in "model of the Caprice." To have this, he determined to have the Caprice extended fore and aft, keeping as much of the original midship section of the hull as possible. He accordingly engaged M. J. Gleason, the designer of fast-going steam yachts, to make the plans, and the work was done in Hawkins's yard at West Jefferson.

The Caprice, which had formerly been the steam yacht, built in 1880 for Charles Schenck of Philadelphia, was carefully refitted. The hull was extended fore and aft, and the new building was added. The work was done in Hawkins's yard at West Jefferson.

Hawkins then had a building, 100 feet high that stood on the shore. This building was built on the commodious, well-ventilated, and with an absolutely water tight roof. This building was built on the commodious, well-ventilated, and with an absolutely water tight roof.

How to Tell an Oyster's Age.  
The oyster, which has been used for the exact age of an oyster, though it is not the oldest evidence, is a good one. Lines in the groove of the oyster shell tell the whole story, and represent a year's growth in the oyster.

Whoever has looked inside an elephant's mouth has seen a strange sight. He never saw a tooth, or saw that the teeth were not like human teeth, but they were like human teeth, and they were like human teeth, and they were like human teeth.

### An Elephant's Tongue.

When the British forces were marching on Peking in 1900, after the capture of the Taku forts, one of the troops became so swollen with the heat that it was rendered impossible. Being aware that the Chinese generally order their coming years in advance and keep them on the premises, they were given to search all the houses in the village and collect every corner with the aid of a few empty cases. The soldiers collected a portion of the Chinese furniture, and the river was then passed in safety.

### Stiles of Stone.

Stiles of stone were used in the leaden bullets coming into use before the end of the fifteenth century. Iron bullets have been used as in use in 1890.

### Steel Pens.

The world uses 3,500,000 steel pens a day.