

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

Helen Gould and Hetty Green pretty well offset each other.

The next time Mr. Astor tries to break into high society he will have a competent chaperon.

To cultivate the correct standing position just touch the nose, the chest and the toes to the wall and then retain the attitude.

Diamond values have increased, owing to the war and the trust. Actresses preparing to be robbed will please make note of this fact.

The superstition that a bulldog cannot go mad is going the rounds of the press again. No tramp of extensive farm-yard experience believes it.

The Chinese name, "Tien-Tsin," means "The Gate to Heaven," but the name is curiously inappropriate just now, whatever it may once have been.

Li Hung Chang may send his son to an American college. Should he do no more than develop into an all-round athlete, it's better than being just a boxer.

Swinging a scythe is fine exercise just after sunrise, if you can avoid everything save the grass. The legs and feet seem to have a quiet knack of getting in the way, and it's bad for them.

One of the paradoxes of the Chinese character is that while ordinarily a most docile and good-humored people they are terribly and ingeniously cruel alike in the punishment of their criminals and in the treatment of their enemies in battle.

Our experienced postal clerks are seldom staggered by a blind address. For instance, a letter from Germany addressed to "Edward Baumgartner, Gunzen, Illinois street 1515, Ithaca," was promptly delivered to Mr. Baumgartner at No. 1515 Ohio street, Quincy, Ill.

The census authorities assert that no difficulty was found in getting answers from women regarding their age, and that the average age of women is greater than that of men. This should explode the perennial joke about the unwillingness of a woman to tell her age, or, if she tells, to prevaricate in regard to it. But will the jokers stop on account of this showing of fact? Can anything block the onward way of what the majority takes to be a good joke, when once it is started? With new generations hungering and thirsting for jokes, would it be well to suppress either this or the mother-in-law joke without supplying something "equally as good?" When the women run all the newspapers, they can take their revenge. But perhaps they will be too magnanimous to do so.

London Truth criticises the severity of the law in dealing with suicides and quotes cases which have their parallel in America. It tells of a man named Bullock, who pleaded guilty in court of an attempt at suicide. A charge of embezzlement had been made against him, which turned out to be unjustified and which was ultimately withdrawn. At the time he was ill and worried, and when a policeman went to arrest him he shot himself in the head with a revolver. When Bullock had been discharged from the hospital he was placed on trial for attempted suicide. He had lost the use of his right eye as the result of his temporary insanity, and his counsel urged that under the circumstances mercy and lenience would be justified. The Judge answered the appeal by observing that "the prisoner has brought all the trouble upon himself," and he sentenced him to three months' hard labor. Truth is trying to secure the pardon of the man from the Home Secretary. Another case is that of a man who has been kept in jail three months awaiting trial on the charge of cutting his own throat. It may be necessary that the law should provide penalties for an attempt to commit suicide, and these penalties may deter some who would otherwise commit suicide; like the man who was prevented from taking poison by his friend, who threatened to shoot him if he did not drop the bottle of arsenic. Yet a trial and sentence to imprisonment for attempted suicide can hardly have the effect of reconciling the punished man to life. It would be better if he were made to feel that the state wanted him to live and would give him a chance to get out of his troubles.

In these days of high-toned living, when one is always mentally quoting to one's friends: "All the world is queer except you and me, and you're a little queer," such an article as J. M. Buckley's "How to Safeguard One's Sanity," in the Century Magazine, is timely and acceptable. He says that the widespread belief that persons of powerful intellect are more liable than others to go mad is an erroneous one. In fact, the opposite is true. "A large number, actually and relatively, of the insane consists of the more ignorant classes of farm laborers, artisans, sailors, soldiers, and persons without employment. Hard-working farmers of the poorer class, and especially their wives, living remote from towns, having little variety in life, reading little, conversing and thinking in the same ruts, furnish a large proportion of such cases." To preserve a sound mind in a sound body one must, says the writer,

observe the laws of health with regard to food, exercise and sleep. Few become insane, who, with sufficient mental occupation, daily take two or three hours of vigorous exercise in the open air, and do not protract exciting studies or business far into the night. "The observation of one day in seven by a complete change in subjects of thought, and the suspension of modes of activity required for six days, would be philosophical, even though it had no basis in religion." Other foes to sanity that the doctor mentions are anxiety, exaggerated sensitiveness, and the lack of occupation that great wealth makes possible. The best prescription for insomnia dates, he says, from the time of Solomon: "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." These are old truths that long ago men grappled to their souls with steel hooks, but the grappings have become weak and it is well to see to it that they are tightened.

At no time in the history of English letters has punctuation had less to do than now in clarifying expression. In the first place, this is the era of the short sentence. Again, the comma is in process of elimination. In the history of printing the comma was the first point of punctuation to be evolved. Greeks before the time of Christ had found punctuation necessary, but it was in an early translation of the Bible that the comma first was used. After other characters had come the comma found new and relative uses. Twenty-five years ago the school text book on English grammar insisted on the use of the comma to mark the least of rhetorical pauses, in addition to setting off every phrase and clause with the same mark. This, simply in recognition of the fact that the tendency to misuse the comma had resulted in an English that was unintelligible without this punctuation point. The comma had put a premium on slovenliness. A sentence could be started blindly, the writer depending upon the comma to link phrase to clause and lead the reader through the tangled maze of his verbiage. He emphasized, modified, colored and phrased where he was content that the comma would mark the way to the end. To-day, however, there is a distinct disposition on the part of printshops to economize in the use of the comma. Already this disposition is having its effect on current literature. While it has a tendency to shorten sentences, it has a still greater mission in forcing clearer sentences. In this elimination of the comma the modern newspaper has taken a lead. As a rule, its favored style admits of the comma only where it is a sharp necessity. Thus the newspaper writer above all others cannot depend upon the comma to point his meaning. Realizing this he writes to avoid it. The result is that adverbs, adjectives, phrases and all forms of modifiers are in closest relation to the parts of speech which they affect, leaving a sentence so clear that "he who runs may read." Whatever may be said of the degeneracy of modern literature no one will deny that the written language of to-day is clearer than it ever was before. Nobody will deny that some of enshrined classics, if stripped of slovenly commas, would be unintelligible. Not only has the comma degenerated, but the italicized point of a witticism, the slovenly brackets, the overworked quotation marks, and the lazy dash, all are reduced to the occasion of strictest necessity. All this has made for better English.

Bridging the Difficulty.
A lady had issued invitations for a dinner of twelve, and on the morning of the appointed day, when conferring with her footman, she discovered that one of the twelve silver shells in which scalloped oysters were to be served had been misplaced. Rigid search for the missing article having proved unavailing the lady decided that, sooner than give up that course, she would simply decline oysters when they were handed to her, and so the eleven shells would be sufficient.
It happened that when the oysters were served at dinner the hostess was engaged in a very animated conversation with some of her neighbors, and forgetting her determination, she took one of the shells of oysters and set it before herself.
If the servant's heart fell in consternation at this he gave no external sign of it, but, speaking in tones distinct though low, said respectfully: "Excuse me, madam, but you said I was to remind you that the doctor forbade you eating oysters."—London Tit-Bits.

A Muddled Memory.
"I'm just aching to have those war dispatches mention some of the dear old Chinese names that were so familiar to me when I dogeared my crude little geography in the old red brick school house on the hill."
"What names?"
"Why, Yang-tse-Kiang and Hoang-Ho, and—and Irragmaddy, and—and Passanquoddy, and—and Tambigbee, and—and Memphremagog, and—oh, yes, Beloochistan, and Speneateles, and—"
"Well, good-day. I'll see you later."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Lemon Juice for Hoarseness.
A singer in grand opera contradicts the statement frequently made that lemon juice is excellent to relieve a slight hoarseness. It may clear the voice at first, but only for a short time, and the strong acid is extremely injurious to the vocal chords.
A woman's idea of obtaining revenge in a perfectly satisfactory manner is to make up a few sandwiches, invite in her friends, and leave the hated one out.

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