

Topics of the Times

Isn't it surprising what a lot of good bargains are offered to a man when he's broke.

Cherries seem to be ripe all the year round for officials of the railroads in the coal regions.

The scientists have now discovered microbes in hymn books. They never seem to think of analyzing a poker deck.

"Between the devil and the deep sea" is translated into the Czar's Russian as "Between the douma and the grand dukes."

A Pittsburg man tried to commit suicide by firing a bullet into his head, but failed because in his case that was not a vital spot.

A Pekin dispatch announces that Wu Ting-fang is going to retire. This will give him time to complete his dictionary of interrogations.

The Chicago divinity student who couldn't repeat the Ten Commandments probably was under the impression that they had been rescinded.

Horace Greeley advised young men to go west and grow up with the country, not to steal it, as some of them apparently have been doing.

Mr. Rockefeller's digestive apparatus, hitherto generally cited as evidence of his evil doing, is now described as entirely normal. What has Miss Tarbell to say to this?

The case of the Pittsburg man who committed suicide on his 201st attempt shows the value of perseverance. Many a man would have quit discouraged when he reached 200.

The international postage convention rejected the proposition of a universal 2-cent postage rate. It was supported in committee by none but the delegates from the United States and Egypt.

One of the new novels bears the title, "Where Speech Ends." In fiction it may be different, but in real life speech ends at the point where the women of the house can't keep awake any longer.

Whistling for half an hour after each meal, according to an expert, is a fine aid to digestion. Now let some enterprising restaurateur hasten to provide a whistling-room and at once monopolize trade.

A rhymer has been sentenced to three months in prison in Berlin for writing some satirical verses about the emperor. Hurray! There is still one place on earth where a poet can gain recognition.

It is not lawful to send stateamen to the penitentiary for putting "jokers" into bills that are seriously intended to benefit and protect the public. It is not lawful either to kick them down the steps of capitol. And this seems a pity.

Is the strawberry such a criminal, after all? The scientists are trying to make us believe that consumption of the berry tends to beget insanity, rheumatism and divers and sundry other maladies. In case of doubt they accuse the strawberry. Meanwhile, a vast majority of people who eat strawberries whenever they have an opportunity are sane and sound.

Automobiling is an expensive pastime at best. If the German government can carry through the Reichstag a bill which it has recently introduced, the sport will become still more expensive. The bill provides that automobilists must pay a life annuity to persons dependent on those who may be killed by their cars and to persons permanently injured by accidents. The courts are to fix the amount, which is to be paid by the owner whether he was in the car or not.

In the long ago, when lying was still a comparatively rare embellishment of literature and oratory, a skilled liar attained the fame and eminence of a Standard Oil magnate or a conspicuous assassin. To achieve a creditable lie covered a man with obloquy, odium and opprobrium of celebrity. Eminent liars were pointed out on the street and had their pictures in the papers. Cheap, disgusting cigars were named after them and the police turned out when they visited a town. But now all that is past. A man may lie until he drops exhausted and no one will notice him. In fine, lying has grown far too common. Liars are as thick as grafters.

It is well known to most Americans that the English people still spell honor and parlor and humor and some other words with the "u," which has been dropped in this country. The English editions of American books follow the English rather than the American spelling, which most Englishmen deride as an "Americanism." It must have been an interesting sight to watch the faces of the members of the British Academy when Professor Skeat, the noted philologist, addressed them. In championing the new simplified spelling reform, he said that the real obstacle lay in the ignorance of those who opposed, and he spoke with particular scorn of those who regarded the omission of the "u" in words like honor as an Americanism,

since such words were spelled without the "u" before Columbus was born. The final "e" in have, live, solve and axe he also mentioned as entirely arbitrary, and of comparatively recent origin.

There is much to be said in favor of some such reform in court procedure as that suggested by Judge Gibbons, the well known Chicago jurist, of limiting the requirement of a unanimous verdict by petit juries to capital and felony cases, and providing some reasonable method of abiding in all civil and minor criminal causes, by a verdict of a majority of, say, three-fourths of the jury. There is force in the suggestion by some members of the bar that care should be taken that in all cases the opinions and arguments of a minority of a jury shall have ample opportunity of being thoroughly gone over and thrashed out by the whole body, and if that is assured there would be less probability than now that any substantial injustice would be done even in felony cases. Probably every lawyer in active practice will agree that the ends of justice have often been defeated or unreasonably and oppressively delayed, and must continue so to be under the rule that enables one man to "hang" the jury and, at the best, force the whole costly proceeding to be again gone over. In civil cases the complaint has long been made that the interminable delays and increasing cost of litigation have made it cheaper to submit to many gross wrongs and exactions than to undertake to vindicate rights in the courts. For the poor man, dependent on his regular employment, it is often said that these delays and expenses amount to prohibition, and there is no shadow of doubt that the fact is responsible for no small part of the prevalent discontent with existing conditions. The requirement of a unanimous verdict in all cases is largely responsible for those conditions. Unanimity on the part of a jury is a time-honored requirement, it is true, but it is not an American institution. It came down to us from the monarchical mother country and had ample justification there in the conditions of earlier ages. But we should not overlook the fact that unanimity is not required for the action of a grand jury, which at any time may put any man in peril of his life, while the legal conditions that were held to make unanimity imperative for trial juries have largely passed away in this country, so far as they ever existed here. Moreover, this is emphatically and distinctively the land of the majority. It may not be abstractly the best way of determining right, but it is, on the whole, the best human way yet devised. We determine by it the most momentous of our affairs. Often matters of high importance are determined by a mere plurality and in all cases a bare majority of one is final. We have always acquiesced in it, and the cases of real injustice under it have been rare, while we have felt it better to submit quietly in those cases than to seek to change a system that has worked so well nearly always. Even in matter of purely legal interpretation, where they are to be determined by a bench of three or more judges, a decision by a majority of the court is final unless there be appeal to a higher court. The rule obtains in the Supreme and Appellate Courts of nearly or quite all the States, and it is no less the rule in the highest of all our courts, the Supreme Court of the United States. If the vital affairs of the nation can be safely entrusted—and they can be and are—to a majority decision of our courts the affairs of individuals, civil affairs at least, may as safely be entrusted to a verdict of a majority "of their peers."

Reforming the Army. When Miss Matilda Hyde returned from her visit to a cousin who had married an army officer, stationed temporarily at an important fort, there were many inquiries as to what she had seen and enjoyed.

"The parades were slightly," said Miss Hyde, thoughtfully, "and I liked the trumpeting and booming and all such, but I tell you the government of these United States is pretty hard on the soldiers, and I said to Emmeline that she ought to take right hold and see to the matter."

"Why, what do you think of such doings as this?" and Miss Hyde turned her spectacled eyes from one to another of her friends. "One day I was there it poured like everything, and Emmeline's husband just laughed when I spoke up about the poor sentrymen, and so on, out in the rain with no umbrellas."

"I'm afraid you'd upset the discipline of this fort if you had your way," he said.

"And I said, 'Isn't it more sensible, Henry Judd, to give those poor creatures umbrellas than to spend your time and the money of these United States on mustard plasters and camomile tea?' I said. But I couldn't make a mite of impression on him!"

Had Several of Those. McCall—You often hear people speak of something as "the picture of despair" and yet I suppose there never really was such a thing.

D'Auber—I don't know, unless it means a picture the artist despairs of ever selling.—Philadelphia Press.

Heard at the Garage. Boy—Mr. Smith is telephoning for his machine. Can you send it to him to-day? Head Man—Don't see how we can. Why, this machine is the only one around here fit to use.—Life.

At least this may be said in favor of the conduct of husbands and wives toward each other: They never talk foolishness over the telephones.

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