

Topics of the Times

Wonder if Mrs. Russell Sage has Count Boni on her list.

The "lone handit" industry has experienced several serious reverses lately.

Even the easy-going Frenchman makes a wry face when he tries to swallow Count Boni.

Brigands are reported to be active in Sicily. Perhaps Sicily is trying to be known as the Wall street of Italy.

A divorced couple named Carr have been reunited by their baby. This is something unique in the line of Carr couples.

The average man thinks he would have an excellent chance of occupying the presidential chair if the office sought the man.

A New York theater offers a free seat to every man who never lied to his wife. This is an absolutely costless bid for notoriety.

The man who insisted on tempting fate by going over Niagara Falls in a barrel has subsided, but the reckless balloonist is always with us.

A Massachusetts club woman wants a law prohibiting a man from marrying more than once. Why not make it to include pretty widows, too?

Miss Ida Tarbell is now engaged in a hand-to-hand combat with the tariff question. Has she exhausted all the possibilities of the John D. Rockefeller question?

The coal supply of the United States is said to be good for 5,000 years. That is, of course, if President Baer, the representative of Providence, doesn't become wasteful.

Countess de Castellane had to content herself with a divorce, the court, possibly through an oversight, having failed to order Boni to be taken out and drowned in a bag.

A New York church has secured a girl whistler in an attempt to increase the number of attendants at services. Why not a real whistler—an office boy or a telegraph messenger?

Notwithstanding the fact that a German savant has shown that the works of Shakespeare were produced by somebody else, Hall Caine continues to look as much like the immortal bard as possible.

Prof. Brander Matthews regards the English language as "violent, illogical, chaotic and absurd." Still, if the professor doesn't like it, he is at liberty to use any of the other numerous kinds on the market.

A New York Judge has rendered the opinion that it is no crime to bug a girl on a doorstep. Without touching upon the legality of the operation there are men who will cling to the opinion that it is exceedingly dangerous if the girl's father happens to be large and husky.

The Postoffice Department wants better roads for its rural carriers, better mail transportation on American ships and safe steel cars for clerks in the railway mail service. It ought to have all of these things. The work of the department in preventing frauds has become increasingly effective, and it may well be carried still farther. It is one of the most useful agencies on the side of sound public morals, just as the whole great postal system of disseminating knowledge is a priceless stimulus to national intelligence.

The fact that eight of the eleven members of the new French cabinet are or have been journalists demonstrates anew the importance of this profession in France. It is the avenue to distinction, as the bar is in England and the United States. The personal element in the French journals is of course the reason. The leading articles are signed, and a man may make a reputation through them in a few weeks, whereas the English or American journalist may write thousands of brilliant leaders and remain unknown. Which of the two systems is the better is a difficult question to decide, although many hold that the anonymous system is the more likely to secure a solid, well-balanced and responsible press.

Novelists, some of whom may never have owned a dress coat, used to be fond of drawing, in their tales, a sharp social distinction between persons who "dressed for dinner" and those who did not. Now the editor of a British medical journal has been discussing and commending from a hygienic point of view the habit of dressing for dinner. Every one knows that a change of clothing is often refreshing. The English editor believes that the effect is physical as well as mental, or physical through the mental stimulus, and advises that even the hard-working clerk, the shopkeeper and the laboring man cast off their workaday clothes and put on clean clothing for the evening meal, when the toll of the day is over.

Like a good many other current discoveries and gospels, the high-voiced talk respecting the necessity for restricting the right of marriage to phy-

sically sound people is as old as civilization. Indeed, the theory goes back of civilization and extends to barbarism, for many savage tribes summarily killed off the unfit. So far from permitting them to marry, they would not permit them to live. In an age when fighting was the chief end of man physical perfection was an indispensable qualification. The weaklings, male and female, had to go—the males because they could not fight and the females because they could not bear fighters. In this stage of the earth's progress the war factor does not enter into the matter so strongly, but all humane and discriminating people must and do agree that the mating of physical or mental weaklings, and especially those affected with the so-called hereditary diseases, is strongly to be deprecated on grounds of humanity and expediency. No reflecting person desires the degeneration of the race. But the contemporary clamor over the matter by people who put the question upon a purely animal basis will lead to nothing save the disinclination of most persons to discuss it at all. There can be no proper objection to necessary plain speaking, but there can be and there is an objection to continual harping on a subject which is perfectly familiar to everybody already. Nobody defends the mating of the unfit. The marriage of consumptives, for instance, is obviously wrong and undesirable. But the evil results of such a marriage cannot be emphasized because everybody is fully aware of them already. The whole thing, in a few words, is the rediscovery by people who are always making such discoveries that two and two make four. The world has known it all along and to vociferate it in the market place does not make it either new or interesting.

Noah Webster, who was somewhat of a reformer in his day, would be gratified, no doubt, were he living, by the compliment of confidence paid to him by the House committee on appropriations, which has inserted a paragraph in the appropriation bill providing that the government printing office "shall follow the rules of orthography established by Webster or the other generally accepted dictionaries of the English language." This bill, when passed, by the House and approved by the President, will put an end to the feeling of public unrest which has prevailed since the difference of opinion expressed by Mr. Roosevelt and Congress in the matter of the 300 words. Naturally it is not believed that the slight clash that has gently disturbed the delightful relations between the President and Congress in this diversity of view will extend to more serious matters. It is not feared that the painful disagreement which marred the administration of President Andrew Johnson will be repeated or that the country will be convulsed by another governmental wrangle. The scorn of dissent which has been born of so-called reform spelling will not be permitted to develop into a sturdy oak of distrust and wrath. Mr. Roosevelt has done what he could to mend—or to mar—spelling, and he still has it in his power by increased private correspondence to emphasize his convictions and repeat his conclusions. It is true that his messages will be printed in the Congressional Record with the antiquated spelling, but there is solace in the thought that, with the possible exception of the proofreaders, nobody will gloat over his discomfiture in the perusal of that medium of communication. It is pleasant to contemplate the settlement of this minor controversy accomplished in a manner so tactful, graceful and considerate, for, of course, in this instance Mr. Roosevelt will courteously yield to the wishes of Congress, just as he will expect Congress will in return defer to him in other matters of public policy.

Would Not Sell His Ancestors. A plutocratic American of the last century who had seen the green acres and stately castle of an Irish estate sought out its impecunious owner with an offer to buy. Lord Blank, eager enough to transmute his profitless lands into pregnant gold, named a considerable, but reasonable, price as one he would be willing to take. "Very well," said the American, "I'll give that if the pictures go with the house." After a little reflection his lordship answered, "Yes, you can have the pictures, except, of course, the family portraits." "It's the portraits I want," said the other. "I wouldn't give a cent for the rest of 'em." "My property is not for sale under those conditions," said his lordship, turning on his heel and walking away, to the astonishment of the parvenu, who flung a "Stuck up beggar!" after the retreating figure.

I Love You. A Danish paper compares "I love you" in many languages. Here are some of them—the Danish paper is our only authority for their correctness. The Chinaman says, "Uo ugal ni," the Armenian, "Ge sirem es bez," the Arabian, very shortly, "Nehabeck;" the Egyptian, similarly, "N'achkeb;" the Turk, "Sisi sevejorum," and the Hindoo, "Main tym ko pijar karyu." But overwhelming is the declaration of love of an Eskimo, who tries to win the chosen one by the pleasing sound of the dainty little word: "Univigsaerut-lunalerdamajungunarsajuk."

We wonder that it never occurs to a drunkard that he could attract a lot of favorable attention by remaining sober. Every man in town would congratulate him, and speak well of him, and help him in every way possible.

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