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The Usury Laws.

From the Portland Daily News.

The usury law is still being discussed by several of our contemporaries—the interior press generally taking ground in its favor. We are satisfied that the time must come when usury laws, like protective tariff laws, will be abolished, and when the policy of non-interference on the part of the State in the private business concerns of individuals will be rigidly adhered to—when men will be esteemed competent privileged to choose their own markets and make their own contracts. But it is doubtful if this will be for some years yet. And yet the Legislature of this State owes it to the public interests to do one of two things, and that promptly: to either abolish the usury laws outright, or take such action as will result in its enforcement. If the law is to remain upon the statute books let it be made effective. Either enforce it or repeal it. As it now stands it is worse than a dead letter in that it invites the evasion and violation of its provisions and thus accustoms men to habits of law-breaking. In this city, many, if not most, of the loans consummated are negotiated by brokers. These, in the transaction of their business pay as little regard to the law of usury as though it had no existence. Every loan they negotiate involves a violation of the law. There is probably not a day passes in which loans are not made at rates of interest ranging from 3 per cent. per month upwards. Of course it is not expressed upon the face of the notes executed, but it is so arranged in the course of the transaction. The interest that is collected above the rates of the usury law comes in the convenient shape of commission and brokerage. No man offers money himself; he always has a friend who thinks he can find it for you, "but of course, this friend who hunts up the lender must be compensated, and his compensation is usually two or three times the amount the law allows to be collected as interest.

Now if the moral sense of the community is so strongly against the law as to authorize and make possible such a practice as this, it argues that the law is impolitic, if not wrong.

We invite the attention of the supporters of the usury law to these facts and suggestions. If they are determined to adhere to the present policy, then we demand of them that they shall support such measures as will make it effective. If the Legislature soon to assemble is determined to stand by the usury law, let it at once enact a strong law to prevent the collection of commissions or the receiving of compensation in any form for procuring or negotiating loans or for rendering any service in that behalf. There certainly can be no objection from this quarter to this course. We repeat—let the usury law be enforced or repealed. The alternative is presented to the friends of the law. Will they refuse to accept it?

The mayor of a Portuguese city once enumerated, among the marks by which the body of a drowned man might be identified, "a marked impediment in his speech."

A Jolly Jester.

Certain circles are going about a trick recently played upon a city official somewhat addicted to the use of intoxicating beverages. Once or twice he had pushed his excess to the verge of mania, and being possessed of many excellent qualities, was gorgeous and brilliant, and but for this single vice might have reached any position he aspired to. His friends had exhausted every possible means to redeem him, unsuccessfully; and three or four of them a short time ago concluded they would impress him with the idea that he had mania a potu. To accomplish this purpose they got him into a room into which they had previously introduced a chicken. Conversing quietly for a few moments, his eyes finally rested on the rooster perched on the desk, evidently somewhat excited in his unusual retreat.

"Why, hello! how come that chicken in here?"

"What chicken?" inquired one of his friends.

"Why, there, on the desk?"

"I see no chicken."

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!" repeated the other friends.

"Why, just look on the desk!"

All of them looked, but professed to see nothing.

"Why, you are certainly blind."

His companions by this time were looking very grave, and cast at each other very suspicious glances.

"Mania!" whispered one.

"Yes, poor fellow, I was afraid it would come to that."

"What are you talking about?" asked the victim, excitedly, the respiration starting out on his forehead, and a singular pallor creeping into his face.

"Poor fellow!" inquired one.

"We had better send for a physician," said another.

This was more than the man could endure.

It would never do, he thought, to have it suspected he was afflicted with "mania a potu." Summoning all his resolution, he burst into a loud laugh, saying:

"Why, gentlemen, I was only jesting. I don't see any chicken either. Did you think I was in earnest?"—Nick-Nax.

THE BENDERS.—After all the arrests that have been made of persons supposed to belong to the Bender family, who committed so many murders in Kansas, all of the family are still at large. The person who was recently arrested in Utah as the elder Bender, and who it had been reported, proves to be a demented old man named Kosh. The county attorney for Labette county, Kansas, publishes a description of the senior Bender in which the criminal is described as a man having an intelligent countenance and resembling in no way the vagrants so frequently taken for members of the Bender family. He adds that all the Benders, notwithstanding their fiendish natures, appear agreeable and pleasant in their manners, and, as they are supplied with money, it is not likely that they will be found acting the part of fools or vagrants.—Winona, Republican.

A Live Paper Cutter.

There is an Eastern air about the following story; but it is not at all an improbable tale:

Many years ago an Indian Rajah, who was a great admirer of his English masters, and who had even learned the language after a fashion, frequently visited the child, and the lady in return pour'd into his sympathetic ears—albeit they are a little deaf—a tale of distress that touched his good-natured heart. It appeared that the little scion was in a most unfortunate condition, having been abandoned by his mother and in a manner repudiated by his father. The good lady in whose charge the child was, had nursed and cared for it from its infancy, the father a wealthy farmer of Fayette, having for three years paid her annually a sum sufficient for the child's maintenance. For the last three years, however, he had contributed nothing to its support, and the lady had come to Lexington to seek out the father and leave the child with him, or enter into some bargain by which she should be paid for her trouble. She brought with her a bundle of letters proving the child's parentage, which we forbear to open to public gaze, as they might revive a scandal that has been six years dead. The lady went with the child to the Sheriff's office, and from there to the County Judge.

The book was uncut, and his vassal had read it through without discovering it. He therefore took it in his hand an ivory paper-cutter, with a beautifully carved handle, and explained its use to the Rajah, who was much pleased, but could not help wondering how they contrived to print the inside of the leaves before they were cut open; this was also explained, and the Rajah departed, carrying with him the paper-cutter which the Vicerey had given him.

About a year after, when the matter was almost forgotten, the Vicerey saw from his window a gallant troupe entering the court, in the center of which was the Rajah, mounted on a young elephant. As soon as the latter perceived the Vicerey, he cried: "Do you happen to have an uncut number of the Edinburgh Review? If so, please toss it to me." The Vicerey threw out the book, which was caught by the elephant and placed between his tusks, which, to his surprise, the Vicerey saw had been turned into paper-cutters, even to the carved handles. In a moment the intelligent beast cut open the leaves and then handed the book to the Vicerey. The Rajah dismounted, and pointing to the elephant, said to the Vicerey: "He is yours. I return you your paper-cutter alive."

The French Government are engaged in establishing a very extensive system of fortifications for the defence of the frontiers and of the important cities of the country. In Paris there are to be eleven advanced fortresses, a considerable distance outside of the other defences; and within these the works already in existence are to be surrounded by a new girdle of fortifications. The fortifications of Lyons are also to be extended and strengthened, and Verdun, Soissons, Reims are to be fortresses of the first rank. Belfort, Langres, Douai, Lille and Besancon are to be made very strong. Wherever railways cross rivers forts are to be erected, and all the passes and roads of the Morvan mountains are to be fortified.

This will be very expensive, but it can be done. What is more difficult to fortify the moral and intellectual constitution of the French people. When the French armies beat those of all Europe the forts in France were comparatively trifling importance. As her defensive works have grown heavier and stronger, her power of defending herself has diminished.

"Crusade syrup," in soda, is much called for in certain Western towns.

CLIPPINGS.

Affecting sight—Barrels in tiers.

On the contrary—riding on a mule.

A spirited youth—One dead drunk.

A highly intelligent dog—the type-setter.

The working-man's favorite dish—Cavendish.

It is said that those Iowa grasshoppers wink at Paris green and smile at hot water.

A Lebanon (Ky.) gent, in greeting a long-haired wife, broke one of her ribs.

Family physicians are carefully noting the promising state of the green-apple crop.

When the Pope becomes so intolerant as to suppress the Bible, it is anything but sublime.

A boot black's father says he never enjoys himself more than when he sees the "son shine."

It is said that in the Paris gardens one may find every kind of roses, even including rhinoceroses.

It is said that the prettiest girl in Harrisburg is a newspaper carrier. She carries then in her basket.

Elijah Bugg, of Springfield, O., has been in bed for nine years. Costar's Exterminator is recommended.

We hold that a woodchuck is fit for treason, stratagem and spoils; because he has no music in his hole.

Our advanced scholar comes in with the suggestion that a title-page is like charity because it begins a tome.

"I come to steal," as the rat observed to the trap. "And I spring to embrace you," as the trap replied to the rat.

The Rochester Chronicle offers three cents per pound for poetical contributions, and writers are not limited as to subjects.

That "little birds do in their nests agree" is no credit to the little birds, because it would never do for them to fall out.

Josh Billings says: "Success don't consist in never making blunders, but in never making the same one the second time."

A Philadelphia gentleman advertises a soap that is destined to wipe out the national debt. There is probably some "lie" about it.

Samuel Gettys, of Springfield, O., is the father of 22 children. It is to be hoped that with all his Gettys he got understanding.

When your pocket-book gets empty and everybody knows it, you can put all your friends in it and it won't "bulge out" worth a cent.

The editor of the Panama Star, apologizes for the non-appearance of his paper by saying that he had to haul off to dig buckshot out of his legs.

A man named Howard, of Delaware, has been sent to State prison for five years for stealing a flatboat loaded with tar. A blacker crime was never committed.

A Cincinnati reporter says that there is something grand in a pair of runaway horses, but we believe that a good deal depends on whether a man is on a fence or trying to climb over the end board of the wagon.