



Herman Billek, the Chicago fortune-teller and alleged poisoner of the Vrzal family, who five times was sentenced to hang, was finally rescued from the gallows when Governor Deneen, on recommendation of the Board of Pardons, commuted his sentence to imprisonment for life. Commutation of Billek's sentence was due to the testimony and subsequent confession of perjury of Jerry Vrzal, who, with his sisters, Emma Niemann and Bertha Vrzal, were the only members of the Vrzal family to escape death by poisoning. To Father P. J. O'Callaghan of the Paulist Fathers more than to any other single person Billek owes the commutation of his sentence. The priest became convinced of the innocence of the condemned man, and his efforts brought out the evidence which spared his life. Edna Billek, the ten-year-old daughter, made a personal appeal to Governor Deneen. Billek, who is 42 years old and was born in Volfort of Bohemian parents, was indicted for having poisoned five members of the Vrzal family. He denied his guilt and blamed Mrs. Emma Vrzal Niemann for his prosecution because he had incurred her enmity.

Science AND Invention

The nation's annual consumption of paper would make a roll 850 feet high by 357 in diameter, weighing about 2,700,000 tons and costing \$36,200,000.

Ferro-silicon and other alloys of the latter metal have remarkable resisting powers, nitro, hydrochloric and other powerful acids having no effect upon them.

To perfect the process of the Oxford paper used for Bibles required twenty years of steady work. The syndicate owning the formula values it at over \$1,000,000.

A six-weeks-old baby at Jersey City, N. J., whose legs have turned to stone, is said to be the eighth case of infantile ossification in the history of medical science.

The fullers' earth industry in Great Britain is practically controlled by a combine, which entrusts the secret of its final preparation to less than half a dozen persons.

A Connecticut inventor has patented a spigot which he says prevents splashing in a sink by directing the flow so that it strikes at an obtuse instead of a vertical angle.

A British consular report shows that Madagascar produced 73,697 ounces of gold in 1905, 64,344 in 1906, and 72,100 in 1907, practically all from alluvial or placer workings.

The immense hydro-electric plant of the Canadian-American Company which has a light and power monopoly at Rio Janeiro was recently completed and put into service.

Sweden's royal forestry commission last year supplied forest products worth \$13,250,000, yet accumulated timber resources equal to twice the amount of timber felled.

A bronze tablet in memory of Andre Marie Ampere, founder of the science of electric dynamics, has been erected in the railroad station of the New Jersey town bearing his name.

Experiments are under way at Calcutta with a gasoline automobile, driven by an air propeller. A speed of 15 miles an hour has been made with a marked absence of wear on the tires.

Herr Schaer of the Geneva, Switzerland, Observatory reports the discovery, in October, of a new dusky ring surrounding the outer border of the bright rings of Saturn. Other observers have since failed to see the alleged new ring, which its discoverer says appeared in the form of two narrow brownish bands projected against the planet, and visible beyond its edge. He thinks it is similar to the interior crape ring, which borders the bright rings on their inner edge.

It was an Englishman, Mr. Whymper, who conquered the heart-quaking Matterhorn when all the world believed its top to be inaccessible. Now it is the English branch of the League for the Preservation of Swiss Scenery

which is doing the most effective work to preserve that marvelous peak from the threatened invasion of a mountain railway, with its insidious tunnels and chimneys, intended to make a road for tourists to a summit which has hitherto been a red ribbon for mountaineers. Nearly 70,000 signatures have been obtained to a petition against the destruction of the Matterhorn. Modern engineering could, of course, make the railway; but in the end would it pay?

BRITISH PRINCES.

Very Different from the King in Exemption from Laws.

So privileged is the King of England in his exemption from any and every law that one would naturally expect his children might do pretty much as they like. But Englishmen have always been very jealous of royal prerogatives, and the fact is that princes enjoy very few privileges indeed. A prince of the royal blood may be fined, like any ordinary mortal, if his motor car exceeds the legal limit of speed.

The Prince of Wales cannot be sued personally for debt. If the debt is not paid the creditor may take out a summons, but he must summon the treasurer, not the prince. If the case goes against the treasurer the money is paid out of the prince's assets.

No child of the King who is under 25 can marry without the King's consent. Supposing, however, a prince over 25 desired to marry and the King refused his consent, then the prince could give notice of his intention to the privy council. After that he would have to restrain his patience for a whole year. If during that time either the house of lords or the house of commons disapproved of the marriage it could not take place. But if both houses of parliament were satisfied the prince could marry the woman of his choice.

A prince has not even the right to educate his own children, for it was long ago laid down that the king has the care and education of his grandchildren while they are minors.—London Telegraph.

His Only Want.

Billionaire's Daughter—You wrong him, papa. He does not love me for my money. He scoffs at the world's sordid eagerness for wealth.

Papa—What proof have you, child? Billionaire's Daughter—Why, only last night he told me he didn't care if he was never able to make a penny in his life if he only had me.

In a Glass House.

"Do you ever tell your wife that she is beautiful or take her a box of candy or a bouquet?"

"Nope, I don't have to."

"No one is compelled to, but it is well to do it."

"Not for me, I can't afford to arouse her suspicions."—Houston Post.

When a husband runs across an old love letter he wrote his wife, he always laughs, but his wife cries.

A woman's notion of superiority is to be able to pay for things by check.

Old Favorites

Beautiful Snow.

Oh, the snow, the beautiful snow, Filling the sky and the earth below; Over the housetops, over the streets, Over the heads of the people you meet; Dancing, flirting, swimming along, Beautiful snow, it can do nothing wrong, Flying to kiss a fair lady's cheek, Clinging to lips in a frolicsome freak, Beautiful snow, from the heavens above, Pure as an angel and fickle as love.

Oh, the snow, the beautiful snow, How the flakes gather and laugh as they go, Whirling along in its maddening fun; It plays in its glee with everyone, Chasing, laughing, hurrying by, It lights up the face and it sparkles the eye; And even the dogs with a bark and bound Snap at the crystals that eddy around. The town is alive and its heart's in a glow To welcome the coming of beautiful snow.

How the wild crowd goes swaying along, Hailing each other with humor and song, How the gay sledges like meteors flash by, Bright for a moment, then lost to the eye, Ringing, swinging, dashing they go, Over the crest of the beautiful snow, So pure when it falls from the sky, To be trampled in mud by the crowd rushing by, To be trampled and tracked by the thousands of feet 'Till it blends with the horrible filth in the street.

Once I was pure as the snow, but I fell; Fell, like the snowflakes, from heaven to hell; Fell, to be trampled as the filth of the street; Fell, to be scoffed, to be spit on and beat;

Pleading, cursing, dreading to die, Selling my soul to whoever would buy, Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread, Hating the living and fearing the dead, Merciful God, have I fallen so low And yet I was once like this beautiful snow?

Once I was fair as the beautiful snow, With an eye like its crystals, a heart like its glow;

Once I was loved for my innocent grace, Flattered and sought for the charm of my face,

Father, mother, sisters, all, God and myself I have lost by my fall, The veriest wretch that goes shivering by

Will take a wide sweep lest I wander too nigh For of all that is on or about me I know

There is nothing that's pure, but the beautiful snow.

How strange it should be that this beautiful snow

Should fall on a sinner with nowhere to go.

How strange it would be when the night comes again

If the snow and the ice struck my desperate brain;

Fainting, freezing, dying alone, Too wicked for prayer, too weak for my moan

To be heard in the crash of the crazy town

Gone mad in its joy that the snow's coming down

To lie and to die in my terrible woe, With a bed and a shroud of the beautiful snow.

—J. W. Watson.

Everybody Lucky.

An old farmer of the County of Durham called at a roadside public house where he was well known. The landlady asked him to buy a ticket for a lottery they had on there.

"Well," he said, "I have naught in my pocket, or I might."

"Oh, that's a' rect, John," she says; "take the ticket and pay for it any time."

Some time later John called again and the landlady asked him if he knew who had won the lottery.

"No," he said, "who won?"

"Well, hardly durst tell you, but our Sam won. Wasn't he lucky?"

"Aye," said John, "he was lucky. And who was second, then?"

"I durst hardly tell you. Who would you think now?" she said.

"I couldn't say," said John.

"Well, it was our Sally. Wasn't she lucky?"

"Aye, she was lucky," said John, "and who was third?" he asked.

"Well," she said, "you would never guess, and I might as well tell. I was third. Wasn't I lucky?"

"You were," he said. "Did I ever pay you for that ticket, missus?"

"No, John, you didn't," she said, frowning upon him.

"Well," said John, "isn't I lucky?"

The Better Part.

A delightful little story is told of Prosper Merimee, the French author.

He was once guest at a royal hunt, when hares, pheasants and other game were driven before the emperor and his followers, and the servants picked up the victims of the sport.

Among all the members of the hunting party, Prosper Merimee alone had no trophy to display.

"How does this happen?" asked some one.

"Where game is so plenty, the merit of a marksman seems to me to lie in hitting nothing," replied Merimee, with grave courtesy, "so I fired between the birds."

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Popping Corn.

A wintry wind was tossing things about, As night fell darkly round a cottage home;

But while discomfort reveled thus without, Within was found a loving, cheerful home.

A blazing fire, a bright, well-lighted room, Tea-kettle singing, and a purring cat, Father to baby humming an old tune, And mother busy fixing this and that.

Three children round the floor skipped playfully— A boy and two sweet girls—Tom, Belle and May;

Tired at last, they asked, quite anxiously, "Can we pop corn this evening? Mother, say!"

The welcome "Yes" gave to each heart content, And busy hands the popper brought to light;

Then o'er the fire six eager eyes were bent, Watching the sea gray kernels turn to white.

Pop pop! "There, one is done!" cried May, Pop, pop!

"Look, Belle! another jumps up in the air! How white they get! O, see that kernel hop!"

The whole are dancing, Tom, I do declare!"

"Quick, shake the popper! Shake, or they will burn!"

"I wish that we could pop corn every night!"

"What jolly fun to see them quickly turn From homely things to pretty balls of white!"

And so they chatted, giggled, danced around,

The sad tale of a little boy who ate his Mother's Yeast!

It rose and

he began to swell, a foot an hour at least. His Father looked at him with pride. He kneaded it, he said And I am glad to see my boy has now grown so well-bread. But Tommy said in crusty tones, "I now must loaf about. For if I try to go to school The boys will turn me out!"

While baby cooed, and father on them smiled, His hard day's work was finished, and he found

That their gay sport his weariness beguiled, So often home-gee serves to glad the heart,

Of youthful laughter drives dull care away;

Few hearts so hard but feel some joy, though start

While watching little children at their play.

—Mrs. Emily Thornton.

The Dijon Popular.

A private letter from a traveler in France speaks of a poplar tree that the writer saw in the city of Dijon, which is the oldest tree of its kind in France. It is 122 feet in height, and is 45 feet in circumference at the base. The city council has an authentic record of the history of the tree, since the year 722. The people of Dijon are proud of it, so much so that they not long ago voted to levy a tax to put a railing around it, so that it might be protected from possible injury. It is good to see sentiment of this kind.

Dolls as Ornaments.

Among the quaint gifts these days is a doll exquisitely dressed. This has come about through the new fashion for dolls used as fashion plates, and made into the figures of charming little statuettes.

At one of the large shops in New York, these little figures, unlike ordinary dolls, are dressed with as much care as a leader of society would be.

The bodies are of gauze stuffed with some flexible material, and the faces are made of a composition, hand-painted. The expression is charming and the face natural.

These dolls are put in all kinds of life-like attitudes. One is crossing the street with a bulldog on the leash; another is sitting in a garden chair, reading or sewing; others are standing in graceful attitudes.

The Dresden ones are like Dresden statuettes. They are small and dressed in a wonderful array of old-fashioned clothes. The best art of the First and Second Empires is called into play, and the materials are of the finest.

Mathematics Versus Poetry.

Some men are so practical that it is utterly impossible for them to take

in even the barest idea of poetical expression. They are like people who look at all beautiful things with eyes that seek only for what use may be made of them. It is said that a young professor of mathematics in one of our universities once boasted to a friend that he neither knew nor cared to know anything about poetry, for it was "all a lot of unpractical rot." His friend thought he might feel differently if he read some stirring poem by one of the great writers, and gave him Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" as a test. The mathematician took up the volume and read thus:

Half a league, half a league, half a league onward.

Then he banged the book down on the table, snorting, "Bah! If the man meant a league and a half, why didn't he say so!"

MOTHERS-IN-LAW CAN'T BOSS.

They Must Go If Able Bodied and Wives Insist Upon It.

If you are a wife, an able-bodied mother-in-law hangs around the house telling you what you must and must not do, you have the right to order her from the house, and if your husband sides with him mother and you leave him, you can make him provide separate maintenance. It is up to the mother-in-law to earn her own living.

This was the substance of a decision handed down by Vice Chancellor Stevenson, in Jersey City, in the suit of Mrs. Elizabeth Keery against her husband, John Keery, a farmer, for separate maintenance, according to the New York World.

Keery married a trained nurse a little over a year ago, and took her to his farm, where his mother, according to his bride, wanted to boss things, and ordered her daughter-in-law to feed hogs and do other farm work. The bride rebelled, and when her husband refused

to send his mother away left him. The Vice Chancellor, in his decision, said:

"Each question of what constitutes a home must be considered on its merits. There is no fixed rule. If a wealthy man and his wife separate until such time as he provides a suitable home for her, he may not offer her a shack in the meadows, which might be all that a poor man could provide. If a man installs his mother in his home when his mother is able to provide for herself elsewhere, it is not such a home as the wife must accept, and in the eyes of the law such conduct is abandonment of the wife.

"If a man's mother is indigent and his income is not sufficient to provide a home for her elsewhere, it is his legal and moral duty to take her into his home. Under such circumstances he would be compelled to ask his wife to make the best of the situation.

"In this case, however, the mother-in-law is a vigorous woman, able to obtain employment and take care of herself. Under the circumstances I am bound to hold that the husband has failed to provide a suitable home for his wife."

A Beauty Doctor.

Knitting has taken on a new lease of life, for one reason, because it so wonderfully beautifies the hands. Some persons go so far as to claim that by the degree of beauty of a woman's hand they can tell whether she knits or not. That is going rather far, yet it cannot be denied that the gentle and continuous exercise of knitting has a remarkable effect in rendering the hand firm, rounded, supple, in keeping it free from bulging veins, and in giving it the soft and dimpled aspect which women so highly prize.

One Course Treat.

"I've got the 'meanest' bean these days," wailed the bachelor girl. "I never saw anything like him. He takes me into some little two-for-a-nickel cafe after the theater and says:

"What will you have? Then, before I can get a word in edgeways, he adds, 'We'll have oysters first!'

"And that's all there is to it. Oysters are first and last. They are all he offers me."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

When a woman has no diamonds she says it is vulgar for other women to wear them.

THE WEEKLY HISTORIAN



1598—The Marquis de la Roche was given a commission by Henry IV. of France to conquer Canada.

1657—Attempted assassination of Cromwell.

1683—First regularly elected Assembly of Pennsylvania convened at Philadelphia.

1776—Andrew Caldwell appointed commander-in-chief of the American fleet.

1781—Americans defeated the British at the battle of the Clouds in South Carolina.

1784—American Congress ratified the treaty of peace with Great Britain.

1788—The Friends in Philadelphia emancipated their slaves.

1805—Joseph Anderson of Tennessee appointed president pro tem. of United States Senate. Michigan territory formed from a part of Indiana.

1813—British frigate Narcissus captured the United States schooner Viper.

1814—Henry Clay resigned as Speaker of the House of Representatives. Peace treaty signed at Kiel by England and Denmark.

1816—General thanksgiving in England for peace, following end of Napoleonic wars.

1817—The ship Georgianna of Norfolk experienced a tremendous shock in the Gulf stream, supposed to be an earthquake.

1828—Boundary line between Mexico and the United States settled by treaty.

1833—Nearly 400 lives lost in the sinking of the Hamburg-American steamship Cimbria.

1839—Massachusetts Legislature re-elected Daniel Webster to the United States Senate.

1840—Vancouver Island ceded to the Hudson's Bay Company.

1850—Faneuil Hall presented with a clock by the children of Boston.

1852—Trial by jury abolished in the Austrian empire.

1854—Completion of the Great Western railroad of Canada. William Walker, the noted filibuster, proclaimed the independence of Sonora, including lower California.

1855—Irish military companies in Boston disbanded by order of the Governor of Massachusetts.

1858—Divorce court instituted in England. Attempted assassination of Napoleon III. by Orsini.

1861—Virginia Legislature appropriated \$1,000,000 for the defense of the State. Georgia passed the ordinance of secession.

1862—Confederates defeated in the battle of Mill Spring, Ky.

1863—Joseph Wheeler promoted major general in the Confederate States army.

1865—United States Senate voted to abrogate the reciprocity treaty with Canada. Fort Fisher taken by the Union forces.

1868—State of Missouri took possession of the Iron Mountain railroad. Senate reinstated Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.

1871—United States Supreme Court declared the legal tender act of 1862 constitutional.

1874—Morrison R. Waite of Ohio nominated for chief justice of United States Supreme Court. Natick, Mass., almost destroyed by fire.

1876—Kalakaua, King of the Sandwich Islands, visited Chicago.

1883—Robert E. Pattison inaugurated Governor of Pennsylvania.

1884—New State capitol building at Des Moines, Iowa, dedicated.

1885—Seventeen patients burned to death in the Kankakee (Ill.) insane asylum.

1895—The Texas cotton palace at Waco burned. Daniel H. Hastings inaugurated Governor of Pennsylvania.

1897—J. Pierpont Morgan presented \$1,000,000 to the Lying-in hospital in New York.

1903—Hundreds of persons killed by tidal wave that swept over South Sea Islands.

1905—Thomas H. Carter elected United States Senator from Montana.

1906—Senator Tillman, in virulent speech, denounced President Roosevelt for the Santo Domingo treaty.

1907—The Rt. Rev. Arthur Sweetman, Bishop of Toronto, elected Primate of All Canada. An earthquake destroyed a large part of Kingston, Jamaica. Dominion government voted \$50,000 for the relief of the Jamaica earthquake sufferers.

1908—John R. Walsh found guilty of misapplying funds of the Chicago National Bank. American battleship fleet under command of Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans arrived at Rio de Janeiro. Two hundred lives lost in theater fire in Boyertown, Pa.

Supplies sold to the 50,000 persons inhabiting the Panama canal zone by the Panama railroad commissary in 1908 amounted to \$9,793,367. During the year 5,196,672 pounds of fresh meats valued at \$283,045 were consumed.