

THE FLORIDA STAR

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WIRES, WIND AND WEATHER.

To the goosebone, the muskrat skin, the appearance of the moon, corns and rheumatic joints has been added a new standard of popular weather prognostication found in the alleged close connection between the varying notes of humming telegraph and telephone wires and the weather of the following few days. This discovery was made by Herr Bock, a German whose title of professor gives to his announcement a certain degree of credibility. The humming of the wires, the professor explains, is influenced by the strength of the wind, the tension of the wires and "various causes which are in turn affected by temperature and other atmospheric conditions." Of course the official forecasters treat Herr Bock's method of observation with derision, as they do all attempts to foretell the weather from phenomena within the sight and hearing of the common herd. Nevertheless the weather bureaus are very far from infallible. While their system of collecting at a central point data gained from observations at many different points gives them an advantage over the ordinary citizen in predicting the course of general storms, the public still has to depend very largely for its information regarding local disturbances upon those signs which Adam doubtless noted in the garden of Eden. One would hardly be justified in making affairs of great pith and moment hang upon his own weather predictions, but it may be worth while to pay some attention to the simple signals which our forefathers found so useful.

THE JURY IN GERMAN LAW.

To say that trial by jury is itself on trial in some parts of this country is not wide of the mark. A very prominent leader at the bar recently declared that if all the cases in which he had been a participant had been decided by a throw of dice instead of by jury verdict more substantial justice would have been secured.

Trial by jury is a feature of criminal procedure in Germany and in one or two important points bears upon reforms proposed in some of the states. In addition to the twelve who constitute the regular jury in Germany one or more supplementary jurors are drawn. These alternates take part in the trial, says a writer in the current issue of the Political Science Quarterly, and have the same right in proposing motions as the regular jurors. They do not retire with the jury nor participate in the verdict, but should one of the regular jurors be incapacitated at any stage an alternate takes his place.

For the affirmative of guilt a majority of two-thirds is necessary. It takes eight to convict, but only five to acquit. In questions of "mitigating circumstances" a simple majority may decide its denial. A tie in such a question is held to be an answer in the affirmative.

In Germany a jury may amend its verdict up to the very point where the court pronounces judgment. The court on its own motion may refer the case for a new trial, but the jury's verdict on this second trial must stand.

There are still some people left who hold that "consistency is a jewel." Charles Wagner came to these shores and preached his simple life doctrine. About that time Mr. Robert Hunter, a New York sociologist, reported that several hundred thousand New Yorkers had received the simple life tenets by wireless and got to the verge of starvation by putting them into practice. Furthermore, 70,000 children of these fanatics went hungry to school each day. In order to counteract this wild perversion of the noble pastor's teachings a dinner party of thirty-six people sat down to a banquet costing nearly \$1,400 per plate, or \$50,000 for the spread, and a committee of rich citizens organized a committee to compel the starving children to eat breakfast before starting for school and also carry lunch. The committee, of course, foots the bills for this important innovation, which is no more than reasonable, since it all is in the interest of society. The children will be useful later provided they grow up able-bodied.

FIGHT OFF HAIL WITH CANNON

The president of the Hall Cannon society of France, Joseph Chatillon, reports some very decided achievements in the way of defending crops from hail by firing cannon.

The report deals with the experience of twenty-eight cannon firing societies, which used 462 cannon in a number of storms. After each storm a report was sent to the president of the agricultural society of the district. It was printed and then distributed for correction to all the farmers in the district visited by the storm. During fifteen years before any cannon were used the losses from hail amounted to \$2,572,316. These figures were obtained from the public offices in which accounts were kept, as the poorer grape growers were indemnified from a public fund for losses incurred by storms. Mr. Chatillon states that the entire losses of the wine growers were not compensated, and he thinks that the total damages amounted to not less than \$3,088,000. During the five years in which the cannon have been in use the losses from hail in the same department have aggregated \$150,412. During the year 1904 these same sixteen communes sustained no losses whatever, a fact which is attributed entirely to the use of the cannon. Says Mr. Chatillon:

We base our confidence in the efficacy of the firing on the fact that the thunder and lightning ceased, the wind abated, and the clouds disappeared under the firing of the cannon, and a mild fall of rain and soft snow succeeded. These facts are undeniable.

The report reviews the results of the firing in twenty-eight storms during the months of April, May, June, July and September. The results are generally the same—cessation of the thunder and lightning, dispersion of the clouds and a slight fall of rain and snow. Where no cannon were used the hail fell and caused serious damage. "The communes not defended by cannon suffered enormously." In speaking of one storm the report says:

This storm was literally arrested at the east on the boundaries of the firing. In the northwest and a little distance from the cannon a hurricane swept over the country with violence, everywhere causing great damage.

The mayor of one commune writes that the "firing was useless in his section on account of the small number of cannon." It is stated that in one or two other communes the firing was commenced late and was ineffective, but that it rendered the storm less destructive in the adjoining communes where it occurred later. This was in an isolated section of the country where there were no cannon in the adjoining communes, and the storm fell upon it with all its force. At the large vineyards the firing is heaviest at the boundaries and very light in the center of the field.

A hurricane on July 22 caused great damage in twenty-nine communes, entirely desolating Lozanne and Belmont, which had between them only fourteen cannon. Says Mr. Chatillon:

This storm broke out at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon over our field of cannon and lasted about two hours. Suddenly, after having attacked our defenses at Builly and at St. Germaine sur l'Arbreuse, it changed its course to the east. Then at Lozanne it deflected to the northeast, continuing to cover its passage with ruin and disaster.

In general this report shows that certain sections fairly bristled with cannon, and, although there were many fierce storms, the losses from hail, wind and rain were infinitesimal. The French government officials do not consider it fully established that cannon firing protects crops against hail, but the landowners have unbounded faith in it and are organizing for a more thorough campaign in 1905.

A writer in American Medicine says that the United States bank bills in general circulation cannot compete with most foreign money in decency of appearance. Abroad, he says, bank notes that come into private possession are fresh, clean and crisp, and he cites the custom of the Bank of England to cancel, destroy and reissue all notes, soiled or not, that are presented for payment. Money has been accused of spreading infectious diseases, and perhaps our progressive health authorities will one day insist upon a periodical cleaning up of the stock in circulation.

It seems to have been a case of "like master, like man," when the Russian soldiers looted the shops and liquor saloons at Port Arthur after the white flag went up. The officers rifled the army treasure chests and despoiled the privates of their lawful pay.

A sixth moon has been discovered doing a periodical trick at lighting the planet Jupiter. Now, if a couple of extra moons could be sent this way the gas and other lighting trusts would shudder themselves and footpads turn to honest callings.

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WHAT IS A GENTLEMAN?

Commenting upon the recent decision of a British judge that a school-teacher is not a gentleman in law, the London News quotes the late Cardinal Newman's decision of a gentleman as follows:

The true gentleman carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast, all clashing of opinion, all collision of feeling, his great concern being to make every one at his ease and at home.

He guards against unreasonable allusions or topics which may irritate. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort. He is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes an unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments.

The cardinal may have described the "true gentleman," but such a man would doubtless impress the general public as being a colorless namby-pamby and a thirty-third degree bore.

The present year opened with eight banking interests—the Gould, Hill, Harriman, Rockefeller, Moore, Vanderbilt, Morgan and Pennsylvania—in control of 80 per cent of the railroad mileage of this country, says the New York Commercial. There is something in this for financial moralists to ponder over, especially if, as the Commercial declares, the number of manipulators is to be speedily and greatly reduced. The paper cites the opinion of "one of the ablest railroad financiers" that within five years all the railroads of the United States will be controlled by five banking interests. Out of fifteen independent roads in the eastern territory in 1898 ten have been absorbed, with the result that the Pennsylvania and New York Central now absolutely control the trunk line territory.

The New York Mail reads a lesson to certain shortsighted people, not confined to any special locality, who, it says, are "swapping forests for blueberries." It cites the forestry bureau as authority for the charge that forest fires are set merely to make barrens for growing berries to nourish the canning industries. A lesser evil is that of burning over lands where the timber has been removed, thus destroying the young growth. Lessons in forestry will not be in vain if this wanton robbery of the future can thereby be checked.

Another "new woman" in the right place is Miss Helen Wilder of Honolulu, who is a duly empowered officer of the law and wears the badge to prove it. Miss Wilder is the daughter of a millionaire sugar king and makes it her special duty to prevent cruelty to children.

When Greeley forty odd years ago kept shouting, "Go west, young man, go west!" he practically advised exile in a wilderness. Today there still is room awaiting the young man, with markets, churches, schools, newspapers and neighbors to boot.

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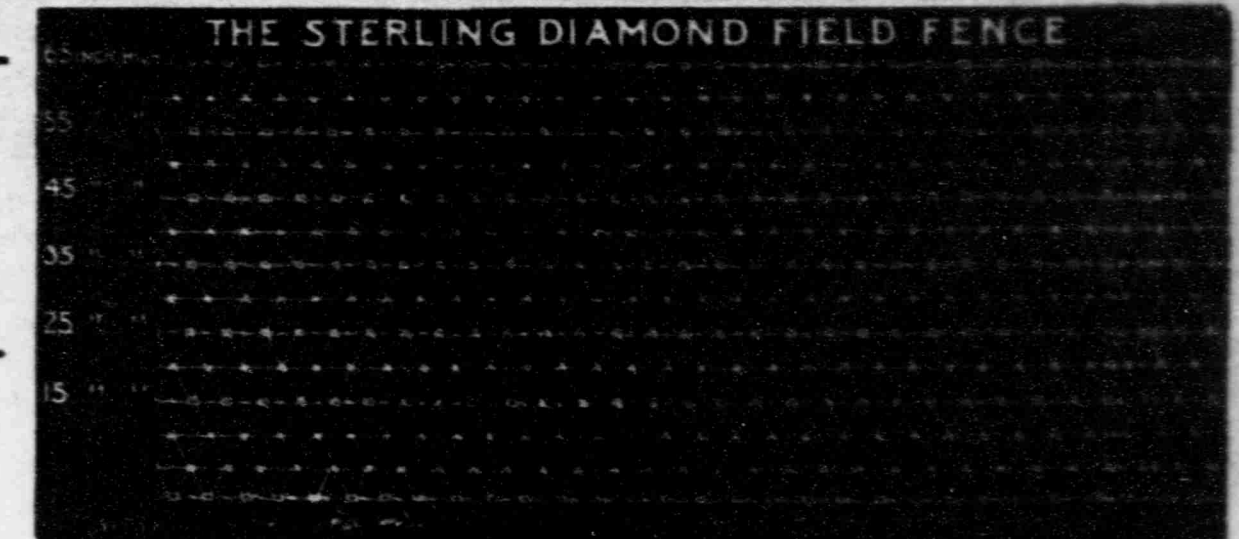
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