

**POPULAR ERRORS.**

THINGS THAT ARE REPEATED FOR MANY GENERATIONS.

Loose Manner in Which Terms Are Applied—What is a Gopher?—The Prairie Dog Fiction—Bugs and Worms—The "Horse Hair Snake"—Sycamore.

A volume could be written on popular errors on scientific subjects. So few people observe for themselves, and so many accept what they hear from others, or what they read, that it is a wonder there are not more errors fixed in the popular mind on such subjects. One hardly knows where to begin on the list, but attention is first called to the loose manner in which terms, especially names, are applied. Take the common gopher as an example. The true gopher is of a gray color, and is about the size of a large rat. He has large pouches on each side of his mouth in which he carries dirt when making his burrows in the ground. His front teeth stand out the most prominently in any of the great family of gnawers—rodentia. His tail is short and looks very much like that of a rat. In some parts of the country a gray ground squirrel is called a gopher. In other parts a striped squirrel or prairie chipmunk is called by that name, while in Kansas, Nebraska and many parts of the west, a small marmot, which is closely allied to the prairie dog, is called a gopher. These marmots are quite common in the country around this city. In most parts of the southwest a skunk is called a polecat and a polecat is called a mink—for the western so called mink is nothing but a polecat. It took 200 years for the popular belief to be given up that beavers use their tails for trowels. In some places yet school readers can be found that teach such nonsense.

**THE PRAIRIE DOG FICTION.** Another popular fiction is that if one shoots a prairie dog his mates will rush out and carry him into one of their dens before it is possible to get possession of him. It is true that such things have actually occurred. Rats have been known to do the same thing, but the instances are rare. Usually a country that is inhabited by prairie dogs, or more properly by prairie marmots, has a dry, thin atmosphere. This condition deceives the hunter and causes him to shoot so far at the little creatures that in the larger number of cases he misses entirely. In the second place, these animals never stop when danger is near until they are at the mouth of a hole. Then they will stop and sit upon their haunches in such a manner that if they are shot they are nearly sure to fall inside the hole. The prairie marmots, mentioned above, that one sees in the country around this city, have the same habit—that of stopping at the mouth of their holes and sitting upon their haunches to look around. Another error is the calling of nearly every insect a bug. Potato beetles, June beetles, May beetles, etc., are all called bugs, when they are beetles. The bed bug and the chinch bug are true bugs, but nearly everything else usually called by that name belongs to the great family of beetles. A beetle opens his mouth sideways, while the bug opens his perpendicularly as we open ours.

Worms are all regarded as worms whether they are true worms or not. Angles or fish worms are true types of worms. Most other worms that one sees are the larvae of insects, and will become imagos or perfect insects in time. The common "grub worm" becomes a May beetle. The large white "grub worms" that have a bluish lid down their backs become "tumble bugs," the true scavenger beetles. People often speak of "eight legged insects" or "ten legged insects," unmindful of the fact that an insect has six legs, and no more or no less. Spiders, then, having eight legs are not insects. We speak of the time when the grasshoppers destroyed the crops, when we mean that the locusts destroyed the crops, and the insects we usually call locusts are the seventeen year cicada.

**THE "HORSE HAIR SNAKE."** The "horse hair snake" is another common source of error. The creature that is usually called by that name originates and has a life history as follows: A small flesh colored mite is in water. It changes to a purplish lead color and comes to the top of the water, where it sports for a time, and when looking across water of a still evening, especially if looking towards the setting sun, one can see masses of these tiny creatures that look like smoke on the water. When they reach this stage of development they leave the water and get out on the leaves and grass. Here, as opportunity offers, they attach themselves to the feet of large insects, especially of grasshoppers, katydids, etc. The legs of these insects being hollow, they crawl up them, where they grow till they fill the legs and sometimes the cavities of the bodies of these large insects. This accounts for the fat, clumsy condition of many of these insects. After a rain, in which the insects drown, the full fledged "horse hair snakes" come forth to delight the small boy and to interest the student of nature, after which they lay eggs in the water, if it does not dry up too soon, and curl around them for a time, and about the time the eggs hatch into the little fish colored mites first described the "snakes" die. It is not claimed that this is the history of all "horse hair snakes," but it is the true history of all that I know anything about.

Another error in the application of names is noticeable in the vegetable world. This is to the so called sycamore. The true sycamore—acer pseudo-platanus—grows only in England, or, at most, the British Isles. Our tree—platanus occidentalis—should be called buttonwood. The true sycamore is as worthless as buckeye or horse chestnut. Another error is held regarding the Virginia creeper—ampelopsis cinque folium—that grows so abundantly along our fences and in our forests. It is a beautiful plant and perfectly harmless. It can be trained over stone or brick walls, over windows, doors, lattices or arbors, so as to give a most pleasing effect; but most people think it is poisonous. They mistake it for the poison ivy—thus toxicodendron—which also grows abundantly throughout the country. The beautiful Virginia creeper, or American ivy, grows plentifully along the Missouri river bluffs and along old fence rows on the uplands. The Virginia creeper has five leaflets on each leaf stalk, while the poison ivy has three leaflets. The creeper is a dark, rich green, and in autumn changes to a vivid russet. The poison ivy is of a lighter green color, but changes to a maroon or magenta in autumn. It also has many more lateral tendrils than the creeper has, and consequently sticks closer to whatever it grows upon.—Edwin Walters in St. Louis Republic.

**A Very Remarkable Story.** This remarkable tale comes from France and no affidavit goes with it: In the forest of Esterel a man and a woman were at work while their infant child, aged 6 months, lay in a cradle in front of their cottage within sight. Suddenly an enormous eagle swooped down, seized the babe and flew off. The father rushed into the hut, picked up his gun, and returning, fired at the bird, which dropped to the earth dead, while the father, holding out his hands, caught the infant as it fell and returned it to the cradle without a scratch.—New York Sun.

**EFFECTS OF CITY LIFE.**

Lack of Arm and Shoulder Exercise—Incessant Noise—Shock.

An English physician of distinction, Dr. Walter B. Platt, contributes to The Popular Science Monthly a suggestive paper on certain "Injurious Influences of City Life." He comes to his observations to these points: (1) The disease of the arms for any considerable muscular exertion by the great majority of men and women. (2) The incessant noise of a large city. (3) Jarring of the brain and spinal cord by continual treading upon pavements.

The effect of these influences, according to Dr. Platt, is to undermine the stability of the nervous system and to impair the circulation and general nutrition. These effects accumulate with each successive generation of city dwellers, and it is asserted that there are very few families now living in London who, with their predecessors, have resided there continuously for three generations.

In regard to the lack of arm and shoulder exercise, the doctor points out that it has an important bearing on the general health of both men and women, since it increases the capacity of the chest and thereby the surface of the lung tissue, so essential to the proper purification of the blood. In the city the mass of people can only get this benefit through gymnastic work, or some form of home exercise, like pulling weights, dumbbells or Indian clubs. The writer insists upon arm exercise as necessary to a perfect physical condition and to the prevention of nervous irritability and consequent mental disorder.

The injurious effect of incessant noise as an irritant to the nerve centers has been demonstrated by experiment, as well as confirmed by observation. A large share of this noise in the residential portions of cities is unnecessary, and should be stopped. "The loud ringing of church bells at all hours of the day and night, in this age, when every one knows the hour of service, hardly recommends the religion of good will to men," says the doctor. Streets of residences should be paved with asphalt; underground roads should supplant elevated structures, and all unnecessary noises of street traffic and vending should be forbidden.

To prevent the shock to the brain and spinal cord caused by the jar of walking on brick or stone the doctor suggests an elastic rubber shoe heel. In this country very little heed is paid to the nerves of the people; they are lucky to escape with their lives from the many perils. But anything that tends to make city life more agreeable and beautiful ought certainly to be encouraged.—New York World.

**The Writer As He Writes.** When you just begin to be an author the sight of the blank sheet of paper gives you an appetite instead of depriving you of it. You long to be at work and cover it with ink marks. A new writer not only enjoys writing, but rewriting also; I have known authors who will copy out a piece, over and over again, until the page appears without an erasure. That is not a bad thing by way of practice, and would no doubt be advocated by the printers. But it is not likely to be kept up more than two or three years. After that the writer knows what he is going to write before he writes it; he has learned the art of putting the contents of his mind directly on the paper; besides, he has not the time to make copper plate reproductions of his work. He is more apt to put it off to the last practicable moment, and then to do it as rapidly as he can. And by and by it will be irksome to him to do it at all; and he will wish that fortune would present him with a year's vacation, during which he could lie on his back and do nothing.

There is a period in the writing of every book when it seems impossible it should ever be finished. What has gone before seems bad, and what is to come is either a blank, or it promises to be worse than the beginning. An apathy, a paralysis, settles upon the worker; he wishes he had taken up butchering or liquor selling for a living. Every day that he postpones the completion of his task it appears more hopeless; his mind is gloomy, his conscience oppressed; he haunts his study, but effects no more than a ghost might; he draws pictures on scraps of paper, reads books that do not interest him, or even plans out work that can only be executed at some indefinite future opportunity; and he sits down in desperation and plunges his pen into the inkstand. The work goes on, and then he wonders how he could have imagined any difficulty. The word "Fins" is written, and he experiences an uplifting of the spirit. Thackeray, according to all accounts, was subject to distressful periods of this kind; but he declares, in one of his essays, that after finishing a given book it was his custom always to begin another before going to bed, in the mood of reactionary light-heartedness following upon his depression.—Julian Hawthorne in America.

**Driving Out the Cattlemen.** Immigration is coming with a resistless tide. Ex-Governor Root, one of the great cattle owners of the west, when speaking of how the range were being so rapidly settled, recently said: "The cow must give way to Nancy and the baby." The first indication of the coming of this great tide of immigration was manifested by cattlemen putting up wire fences and inclosing vast areas of land. This sufficed for a time, but immigration still continued, and then after much litigation the courts said: "Take down your wire fences." As the cattleman occupied these great ranges for a quarter of a century before it was ever thought possible for them to have any value for agricultural purposes, it is not strange that they should have made the determined fight they have. The pioneer share now glistens in the old "American Desert" and the old cattle trails are being turned into farms. The east can hardly realize the wonderful changes that are taking place. Within twenty-five years the buffalo, which used to roam these plains by the tens of thousands, are almost extinct. The great herds of the cattle kings took the place of the bison, but now the cattle ranges are being turned into farms.

What will be the result? The general impression is that there will be more cattle, but with more owners. The public domain will soon all be taken, which will necessitate the dividing and subdividing of the great herds. The result will come about in a natural way and without loss, but rather with profit. As the grazing area becomes more circumscribed the greater the necessity for winter feeding and the production of some kind of feed that will more readily prepare stock for the market. Such feed consists of alfalfa, sorghum hay, Johnson and other varieties of farm grasses, oil cake, roots, etc., while in parts of western and southern Texas prickly pear is species of cacti is being largely used with cotton seed meal or oil cake, with which it is claimed cattle may be easily fattened. The beef from animals thus fed is said to be of a most excellent quality and flavor.—Denver Cor. Globe-Democrat.

The principal foreign missionary societies of the United States send in the aggregate \$3,500,255 annually for the spread of the Gospel in heathen lands. Great Britain through her various societies expends on missionaries \$4,619,022.

**THE FISHERMAN'S SIGNS.**

HE STOUTLY DENIES THAT HE IS AT ALL SUPERSTITIOUS.

But He Believes That a Wet Sunday Always Follows a Wet Friday—Bad Luck To Break a Looking Glass—Other Mysteries.

"Next Sunday will be wet." "How can you tell?"

"Wet Friday, wet Sunday, replied an old fisherman who was smoking a well colored meerschaum pipe and discussing a cup of strong, black coffee in an eating saloon. He was a typical fisherman. He had large, clear blue eyes, a bushy head of hair, and a hand as hard as a marlin-spike. He stoutly denied that sailors were superstitious, and maintained that their reasonings were founded on fact and not fiction. No look for him. In spite of his denial, however, fishermen are probably the most superstitious class of people on earth.

"Just tell me something about a fisherman's life and his superstition," asked the reporter of the veteran. "Fishermen don't have any superstitions, sir, and if they have they are far below those that you land lubbers are a prey to." "You just now mentioned one; wet Friday, wet Sunday."

"That's no superstition; that's a fact and one you can't alter. I've grown old in the business, and as long as I can remember I've never seen a wet Friday that was not followed by a wet Sunday."

**AN UNLUCKY DAY.** "Don't you think it superstitious not to go fishing on Friday? Why should you select that as being an unlucky day?"

"No, I don't. Just so long as a fish have lived in the water and men have taken them out, Friday has been an unlucky day for our trade. You just try it and you'll find that I'm right."

"Why is it that you never allow whistling on board a fishing boat?"

"Because, me boy, it's calling on old Nick to make his appearance, and he always brings wind with him."

"Fishermen don't like to begin any undertaking on Monday. What's the reason of that superstition?"

"I told you a minute ago that it was not a superstition. The meaning of it is bad Monday, bad week."

"Now, if one of your shipmates should smash a looking glass on board ship you give up all hope of getting a good haul."

"Yes, sir; I never saw it fail yet, and I have seen a good many broken in my time, and just as sure as it occurred a gale came on and blew great guns, and we were compelled to run for shelter. If that failed, then we sought no fish. I've known men that had to go out of the business because they were always smashing things, and no one would sail with them. I dare say you would laugh at me if I told you that I got a good drubbing from a skipper under whom I once sailed because I showed the dory off from the side of the ship with my head pointing to the sun."

"What did that signify?"

"It means simply defying the elements, and whenever you do that take my word that nothing good comes from it."

"How is it that you are so certain of your storm prediction?"

**SIGNS OF THE HEAVENS.** "Oh, that is simple. Year in and year out we study the signs of the heavens, which are very accurate. Certain stars, bright or dull, mean certain things. The wind from a given certain quarter in a certain month is almost sure to bring stormy, fair, dry or wet weather, as the case may be. The moon gives us a good deal of information; if she is on her back, then look out for a storm; if her horns are pointed then you may expect cool or cold weather, according to the season of the year. If there is a large, hazy circle around the moon, then you may look out for a good rain storm or a steady rain fall. Then the big and little bears give us some useful knowledge, according to the different positions they assume."

"When going on a fishing trip—I mean, of course, deep sea fishing—how is it that you can tell exactly where to set your net or cast your lines?"

"That's as easy as smoking your pipe. You see, a rock or a bank is situated exactly by the compass in a certain bearing or locality. Well, we can tell just as well without a compass, and it is very simple. Suppose the fishing ground is ten, twenty or thirty miles from the land. We sail in the direction of it until we get two headlands in one, as it were. Then we can tell to a dot how far we are out, and in the moment we know where the fishing bank is, but we sail on until the headlands or banks is visible; that gives us so many miles, just as exactly as if you measured it with a tape, so that we know where we are. A high church steeple, a lighthouse or a land bluff all tend to show the accustomed eye of a fisherman where he is."

"Then it isn't true that you can tell by the water?"

"In some cases we can, but as a general rule our land bearings are the most reliable."

"There is no emergency that would compel a fisherman to make any repairs on Sunday, either in the sail department, rigging or hull of the vessel."

"Experience has taught us that Sundays must be kept. If you drive a nail in the piece of the wood of your vessel on Sunday look out, for that is what we call nailing the trip. Should you mend your sails, the first wind rips them again, and if you fix or mend your rigging it will come down about your head or ears the moment you go out. I have myself had needles break in my hand when I attempted to sew on Sunday. That was when I was a youngster, and thought it would be a big thing to defy the rules."—Lewiston Journal.

**Burning Bricks in a Kiln.** Burning bricks in a kiln seems to be a very easy matter, but if one looks into the business he will find that such an impression is entirely incorrect. I have been at the business twenty-five years, and I believe that I am in a position to speak intelligently on the subject. When the bricks leave the press they are taken to the kilns and piled in such a manner as to permit the heat to reach every brick. Of course, the layers near the fires are always burned harder than those on top, and it is the amount of heat that regulates the grades. The bricks that get the most heat are strictly hard; further up you will find the medium, and on the top of the kilns we get the salmon, the softest grade, used for filling up between the walls. When the fires are started the greatest care must be exercised, and if the burner who has charge of the kiln don't understand his business, he may ruin the bricks. Too much heat will bring about such a result just the same as an insufficient amount. The stock brick, which are formed in finer molds, are burned in different kilns from the other grades, and, as they are very hard, you can see that they must be subjected to an intense heat.—Brick Burner in Globe-Democrat.

James Whitcomb Riley complains that some conscienceless scribes are palming off cheap imitations of his poetry, with his name attached, upon certain gullible editors.

**BROOKLYN LAUNDRIES.**

CONVERSATION WITH "JOHN CHINAMAN" AS TO THE BUSINESS.

A Woman's Opinion on Hand Work and Steam Work—Heat of the Drying Room. Visit to a Steam Laundry—Machine Work.

Chancing one day to be passing a Chinese laundry which had the name James L. Yu on the door, the thought suggested itself to the scribe to step in and see how the laundry business is carried on.

"Hello," said the reporter, "how is business?"

"Oh, business no good. People all gone to country; no make much now."

"Will you tell me how much you average of a week and how much you pay your assistant?"

"Make about \$15 a week in winter, sometimes \$20 or \$25. Pay him (his assistant) \$10 a week. Then have to pay \$30 a month for house, and coal and wood, light and rice, vegetables and meat cost."

"Will you let me see the back room?"

"Yes, I let you see, but no stay long here now; want you go home."

The reporter started back into the kitchen, which was so hot that nobody but a Chinaman could stand it any longer than five minutes. There was nothing in it but a few pans, a rack, a table, two chairs and a red hot stove. Between the stove and the kitchen, in a sort of passageway, were two bunks, very much on the plan of stateroom berths, one over the other.

Chinamen, generally speaking, live on rice and vegetables—very little meat. They eat the rice with chop sticks, and when eating they never sit on a chair properly, but place their feet on the chair and assume a sort of doubled up position. In writing they use a long reed with camel's hair stuck in one end in the shape of a brush. This instrument is called a "bid."

"Do you go to Sunday school?" asked the reporter.

"Yes, I go to Methodist Sunday school in Atlantic street. No burn 'Joss' stick no more, no worship him no more. Now you go home!" said he suddenly.

Walking up Fulton street the reporter came to a laundry kept by a native. Would she give any information?

"Oh, certainly; with pleasure."

"Will you tell me how long you have been in this business, and if it pays?"

"Well, I've been in it about three or four years now. As to its paying, I think it does. I manage to make a good living out of it, beside giving employment to eight women, not counting two girls who stand behind the counter to do up the clothes and wait on the customers. And it is all hand work, too."

"Do you not find it very warm in the summer?"

"Oh, yes, it is warm all the time, winter and summer, in the drying room," here she showed a small room in the back of the store and opening the door, said: "This is the drying room. As you can see we have a stove red hot all the time, and this room is lined with sheet iron, so that there is no danger from it and all the heat remains within."

"Do you think this business is injurious to health?"

"Not a bit of it. It would be probable if we had to be over that hot stove all day, but you see I have another stove going down in the kitchen, and that is where the irons are heated. Of course, it is hot, but not nearly so hot as the drying room."

"What do you think of the steam laundries?"

"I don't think much of them, to tell the truth. I suppose it lightens the labor a good deal to have rollers to iron with by steam, but then you'll find that the collars and cuffs and other things will eventually be worn out before their time by that system."

"What do you think of the Chinese?"

"The Chinese, is it? Well I never look at a Chinaman but what he puts me in mind of a dried up monkey. But as for them washing and ironing any Christian's garments, I tell you if I never had anything washed I wouldn't get a Chinaman to do it. Fudge, I can't bear them."

The next visit was to a steam laundry.

"Do you employ many hands?"

"Well, between twenty and thirty, I think. And I would not be surprised but what next winter we will have to employ more, as this kind of work is constantly increasing. People don't care to have their white goods done at home. Whether it is because they are not done up nice enough for them, I don't know, but in nine cases out of ten you will find that all the white goods find their way to the different laundries in the city."

"What do you mean by white goods?"

"Oh, collars, cuffs, shirts, ladies' collars, skirts, etc. Of course, we do more of a business in men's collars, cuffs and shirts than anything else."

"In your opinion, does it injure clothes any, this steam work?"

"Why, bless your heart, no! How could it. Some people have an idea that we merely soak the things once or twice in the water, starch and dry them and then put them through the ironing rollers. But we don't do anything of the sort. The clothes in this laundry are thoroughly and carefully washed, and as carefully finished off before they leave our hands."

"How many drying rooms have you?"

"We have only one drying room, but it contains no less than five medium sized stoves, and it extends nearly the full length of the cellar. Do you know I think we have the best drying room in the city? Why if you put a new shirt in there, in five minutes after you put it in you can take it out, bone dry."

"How does hand work compare with this steam work?"

"Well, I don't pretend to know half as much as some people, but my opinion is that when a machine can lighten the labor, why I say use the machine by all means, no matter what the motive power. As for hand work, well it's all well enough in its way, but let those who like it do it. Steam work is the thing; why, while a woman at the old hand work system is finishing one collar we can finish two every time; of course skirts have to be done by hand."

"Do you know if the other steam laundries take in skirts?"

"Well as to that I couldn't say. There is not much in them, in fact there's more bother than their worth, but then you know if a lady says she wants a thing done it has got to be done, and that's an end of it."

"Can you tell me about how much you average a day or week?"

"Well I would not like to tell that, but you can see for yourself that if this laundry employs about twenty people all summer round, and ten or fifteen more in the winter, with the fact that business is constantly improving, why then of course, we do take in a little money."—"P. C." in Brooklyn Eagle.

**Both Ends Hungry.** Two little boys were at the circus, looking at the elephant.

After the elder boy had given the animal several peanuts, the little fellow cried out: "Oh, Pa, can't I give his other tail some peanuts, too?"—The Epoch.

**The Plattsmouth Herald**

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**The Year 1888**

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