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THE PLURAL OF CANNON.

The Wilmington *Star* has recently given two interesting editorials on the question whether the plural of the word cannon should be written cannon or cann*ons*. From the second of these we copy the following paragraph containing a memorandum from Capt. Catlett with the comment thereon by the editor of the *Star*:

"'The grammar of Reed and Kellogg as well as most complete grammars of the English language give the plural of cannon, cann*ons* where individuals are meant, cannon in a collective sense. Webster has the following: 'Can*nons* are made of iron, brass, bronze, and sometimes of steel rods welded, &c.' I think, however, the tendency is to disregard the distinction, though the early use of the word is in favor of *cannons* as the plural.'"

"Now for our authorities. We do not believe can*ons* is correct, whatever some grammarians and dictionary makers may say to the contrary. We consulted *Stormonth*, the excellent English dictionary, and were surprised to see it countenanced *cannons*. And yet but few, if any, eminent *writers* of England we think, ever use that form, but always write can*non* for the plural. After receiving Capt. Catlett's note we went to our library and made a necessarily hurried examination of authorities. We found that three editions of *Worcesters*, including his latest, * * all gave can*non* as the plural form. We also turned to that eminent authority Archbishop Trench. He says: "Our wooden artillery were * * called can*non*." We next turned to Tower's Common School Grammar and found him writing "six can*non* and "twenty head of cattle and thirty sail of vessel."

The plural of words in the English language ending in *on* is formed by adding *s* to the singular; salmon and a few others have the same ending in the plural as in the singular, usage, however, as may be seen from this article, has admitted of writing either can*non* or can*nons* as the plural of the word cannon.

We note in passing that Webster, in the edition of his Dictionary of 1847, wrote "Guns of this kind are made of iron or brass, etc." The editors of the current edition of this Dictionary substituted the word cannons for guns in this place. We add the following references to technical authors who have used the form cannon as the plural of the word. The author of the article on cannon in Appleton's Cyclopaedia writes "Cannon, implements of war for throwing heavy projectiles, etc." We have before us the volume of the Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston, which contains Treadwell's paper. "On the Practicability of constructing Cannon of large calibre." Can*non* is also used as the plural of this word in the U. S. Government Document entitled "Reports of Experiments on the strength and other properties of Metals for Cannon, with Classification of Cannon."

We do not know whether the early use of the word is in favor of can*nons* as the plural, but there has been an evident tendency among writers of recent times to substitute the generic word guns for cannon. We are of the opinion that as there is sufficient authority for the use of cannon as the plural of the word and as this form is more euphoneous than can*nons*, we should prefer to write can*non* as the plural.

CONVICTS ON PUBLIC ROADS.

It seems to us a wasteful consumption of time for the Legislature to discuss the question of working the convicts on public roads. It may be true that large towns that could work a considerable force might be warranted in putting up stockades and working the roads out for a few miles each direction from town; but it may be qestioned if it would not cost more to build shelters and guard a small squad in a sparsely settled section than it would to work the roads by a tax levied for that purpose. To work the convicts in this way would necessitate a large expenditure for guards or half the number would make their escape into some other country within twelve months. We know that the railroad companies though provided with good stockades and furnished with a number of vigilant guards have frequently let convicts get away. In our opinion the convicts should be put to work on public works, but not on county dirt-roads. If our legislators would work for the interests of the people and not for this or that party, the convicts might be employed to build a State road from the seaboard to the mountains. Such a road might be so projected that it could be graded without a dollar cost to the State should both parties enter into the measure with the understanding that it should not be made a political issue.

Survey the road and put several hundred convicts at work on it, and hire the rest of the convicts to railroad companies, and appropriate the pay to feeding, clothing and guarding those working on the State road. It would of course require some years to build so long a road but there is no prospect that the force of convict labor will be appreciably less than now, and some provision must be made for them so long as crime exists.

In commenting on an article in the Wilmington *Star* some months ago we said the word *tote* to carry does not occur in Chaucer or any other English writer known to us. The *Star* has quite recently expressed itself as "not yet satisfied that the word 'tote' does not occur in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." Now what we said was that tote meaning to look, to gaze occurs in Chaucer and other old English writers, but that our word tote to carry does not so occur. We have seen nothing yet to cause us to differ from the opinion we have already expressed.

OUR STATE CONTEMPORARIES.

The politics of Virginia and North Carolina are prodigiously mixed. It would puzzle the Philadelphia bar, when at its best, to tell the difference between the measures advocated by many Democratic and Republican papers. They seem to be tarred with the same stick. Some of the Georgia and Alabama papers are in the same predicament.—Wilmington *Star*.

The county government system, or rather the bill to repeal or amend it, has been made the special order in the House for the 25th. This is a serious question, especially to Eascern North Carolina, and let us trust that the best interests of our State and the good and welfare of society, and of the people generally, will not be jeopardized, or eved recklessly considered. The East cannot afford to have the present system repealed, and we know and believe that the good people of the western counties will not be willing to see these eastern counties again consigned to negro misrule, corruption and lawlessness—Goldsboro *Messenger*.

The present county government system, which is the system of Government under which our fathers lived, should not be repealed. It is possible to amend and improve it in some minor respects, and this may be done, but to repeal the law and return to the lax and ruinous system prescribed by the military Constitution of 1866 to 1875 would jeopardize every material interest in North Carolina. Financial ruin would follow in the counties of half the State and our progress as a people hindered for years to come. It is difficult for us to see how any good citizen who loves his State and wishes to see her prosper can entertain such idea. Men whose chief concern is to find opportunity for plunder may very naturally desire a return to the dark days of State bankruptcy and poverty.—Biblical *Recorder*.

There are five counties touching Edgecombe—Martin, Pitt, Wilson, Nash and Halifax, and for taxation not one places the same value upon a mule, which sells for the same in any of these counties. The average value in Martin is $79, which is the highest, and Edgecombe the lowest, $62. In oth- counties of the State the value varies, going as low as $40 per mule. The average in the State is a few cents under $60. The same grade of mule that are brought and sold here are carried to Martin and sold to the people there. If we take the valuation of the land, excluding towns, that of Edgecombe is valued at nearly one dollar per acre more than that of any other county, valued at more than land equally as fertile and in all other respects equal except being in another county, though it is contiguous. We submit that these valuations are not fair, and that there is no way to remedy this under the old system.—Tarboro *Southerner*.

STATE NEWS.

The C. F. & Y. V. Railroad is now running to Stokesdale west from Greensboro.

Hon. Joseph J. Davis, of Franklin county, has been appointed by Gov. Scales to the place made vacant by the death of Justice Ashe.

Charlotte *Chronicle:* The hard times have had the effect of inducing the country merchants to buy almost exclusively and in smaller lots from our home dealers instead of sending their orders to Northern houses, and from this it seems that some good can result from hard times.

Washington *Progress:* The fishing season has fairly set in and the catch is very good. An old fisherman informs us that he never saw herrings in such quantities this early in the season before white shad too, are plentiful, one fisherman catching twenty in one night last week.

Greensboro *Workman:* We very seriously doubt the report about Walter Bingham being seen in Haywood county. It answers very well to keep the sensation stirred, and may possibly turn out to be true, but it is very unlikely. That other report about Bingham coming across from New York to Durham, going thence to Carey, is about the same stripe, or worse.

Henderson *Gold Leaf:* The town has been full of tobacco for the past week—all of our warehouse men are worked to their full ability, and all grades are bringing good prices.—Last weeks business at the several warehouses was the heaviest work of the season. In point of both quantity and quality of the tobacco the sales were much above the average.

New Berne *Journal:* Our telegrams last night state that the bill to allow the commissioners to levy a special tax has already passed the Senate. We are as much opposed to unnecessary taxes as any taxpayer in Craven county but we see nothing to be gained, only for those who invest in county vouchers at a great discount, by allowing a floating debt to accumulate.

Jefferson *Appalachian Philosopher:* Colonel Grayson made a speech at the Courthouse last Monday stating that he had received a letter from a gentleman connected with the South Atlantic and Northwestern Railway Company stating that the road would certainly be built through Ashe as rapidly as men and money can do it, and said that he is creditably informed that the cars are already within 40 miles from Smithville.

Winston *Daily:* Without giving the calendar of petty cases disposed of by the Superior Court, the following are the convicted sentenced to the penitentiary: Ed Jones, larceny, 10 years; Wm. Johnson, larceny, 6 years; Wallace Masten, larceny, 5 years; Jerry Lash, larceny, 5 years; Ephriam Williamson, larceny, 5 years; J. Fisher, larceny, 3 years; John Christian, larceny two years; Thomas Summers, larceny, 3 years. All colored.

Wilmington *Star:* It is telegraphed from Raleigh that there is unusual activity in police circles concerning Walter Bingham, the deaf mute murderer. A large number of copies of Gov. Scales' proclamation offering $400 reward for his arrest have been forwarded to sheriffs and other officers in the western part of the State, and there is general belief that in a few days some interesting developments may be expected. The point at which Bingham was last seen is only a few miles from Waynesville, the county seat of Haywood, where resides a distinguished criminal lawyer who married a cousin of this now notorious fugitive. It is intimated that search will be made for Bingham in all that part of the State west of the Blue Ridge mountains.

Asheville *Advance:* Recently there has been an influx of Pennsylvania capitalists into this State. The well known "Marion Bullion Co," operating in the "Brackettown district" of McDowell county, probably took the lead. There have followed this first investment two other corporations known as "The North Carolina Bullion Co.," and "The Southern Bullion Co."— There are a dozen or more experts and mineralogists now searching in the middle and western counties of North Carolina for various useful and valuable minerals. Exploration for corundum are being conducted in Yancey and Macon counties.

——Recently a company has been organized in Chicago for the purpose of developing certain large iron ore beds which are known to exist in the northwestern part of North Carolina. These iron beds are immense and are traceable for six eight and ten miles. They are of a quality to justify the expenditure of vast sums in developing and working them. This Chicago company was organized with a capital stock of two and one-half million dollars, and the entire stock was taken by six men, so the writer is informed. These gentlemen intend to begin operations at an early date.